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On this day, the people that Zhu Junyang brought along had a decent outcome. Altogether, they had caught six wild horses. The best horse that they had caught that day was the light buckskin colored horse that Royal Prince Yang had personally trapped.

As for Commander Liu's group, they didn't come back to the stud farm that day as they had traveled farther to find the other herd of wild horses. Three days later, they came back with eight proud and hard to tame wild horses. Although none of them could compare to the superior horse that their master had caught, every single one was still much better than the other specimens at the ranch.

Following that, Commander Liu and his subordinates began to tame these wild horses. Taming a wild horse wasn't something that could occur in a day or two. Fortunately, Commander Liu and his men had learned from the experts on how to tame horses properly after they first arrived here. Other than the buckskin colored horse giving them some issues, the rest of them would only require a bit of time before they were ready.

Unexpectedly, the wildest and most arrogant buckskin colored horse was actually the one that got tamed first. Zhu Junyang was tough and unyielding and his equestrian skills were consummate. In addition, that day he was extremely worried about Xiaocao and poured his entire temper on this unlucky horse. The tricks and strategies he used on that light buckskin colored horse had left an impression on the animal. Thus, whenever the horse saw the prince, it was even more obedient and gentle than the other horses at the farm. Under the absolute suppression and power of another, what was the point of being a proud and arrogant wild horse? Could pride be eaten ah?

Yu Xiaocao, on the other hand, pitied this poor horse as she was part of the reason why it had been dominated so thoroughly by the prince. Every time she went to the stables, she would always bring some tasty snacks and special feed for it. Whenever the horse saw her, it acted like it was seeing its own mother.

However, once it saw the fiendish shadow that was inseparable from her, it immediately held its back and didn't dare to make a loud noise. Even when Xiaocao stuffed a piece of rock candy in its mouth, the horse acted like a noble born young maiden and delicately ate the food in a refined manner.

On the days that Zhu Junyang didn't come along, it would happily circle around Xiaocao, acting spoiled and using its mouth to gently pick at her embroidered pouch full of treats. It would even use its tongue to wash Xiaocao's face and was actually more servile and flattering to her than Little Black.

In the blink of an eye, five days had passed and there was no news of seeing the white horse and its other compatriots. Yu Xiaocao felt a bit disheartened by this. Were her special tricks useless in front of this extremely hard to encounter divine steed? She thought for a bit and wondered if it was because she hadn't added enough mystic-stone water to the sugar cubes at the time.

Yu Xiaocao, who wasn't particularly good at concealing her inner thoughts, always had a hint of worry on her face due to this. Zhu Junyang didn't want her to become depressed and anxious over something that was his responsibility, so he decided to take her out for an outing to relieve some pressure. He knew his lass liked the feeling of a successful hunt and the feast that came afterwards.

About a few hundred kilometers east of the stud farm, there was a mountainous area that one of the outside tribes called 'Jinalin', which to them meant 'white mountain'. It was said that, on the highest peak in that range, the snow there never melted. On clear and sunny days, one could see the distant white cap of the mountain, which explained how it got its name.

The people from the outside tribes who had been hired to help train the horses at the stud farm said that there were a lot of animals in that mountain. Many hunters longed to go there. However, the fierce beasts in there were incredibly vicious. Oftentimes, during blizzards, they would descend down the mountain and hurt people. Consequently, no hunter would dare to go into the mountain on his own unless they absolutely had to make a living.

Since people very rarely entered deeply into this area, there should be a lot of valuable medicinal plants available, secondary to the plentiful prey. Wasn't the northeast also known for housing the 'three treasures' ah? Other than ginseng, the mountains also had reishi mushrooms, manyprickle, schisandra, Mongolian milkvetch, and other medicinal herbs. The little lass was well-acquainted with using these herbs and also liked to come up with new pills and medicines to treat and heal people. She should be very interested in gathering wild medicinal plants, right?

As for the fierce beasts, he was confident in his own abilities to protect her completely. It was the perfect opportunity to obtain some beautiful bear and tiger pelts to be used to create a splendid mattress for the little lass. He still remembered that during the Autumn Hunt, the little lass was very interested in tiger pelts. She also took quite a few tiger bones back as well and used them to make some bone-strengthening medicinal wine. All of the influential officials scrambled to buy some. In fact, the capital now had a saying: 'A thousand taels of gold may not be enough to buy the Yu Family's medicinal wine'.

Sure enough, as soon as Zhu Junyang outlined his proposal to her, Yu Xiaocao grinned widely. Her pair of large, pure eyes shone like the stars and they curved up in joy in the shape of the crescent moon. Her glowing little face seemed to beam with happiness. At this moment, the young maiden seemed to be imbued with a halo of light that struck a person's heart. If it weren't for that maidservant named Wutong by her side, glaring like a fearsome tiger, Zhu Junyang would have long pulled the little lass into his arms and kissed her silly.

Yu Xiaocao had no clue that the man next to her was already getting wolfish thoughts, stalking her closely. Her heart was very clear. The mountain range that Zhu Junyang was talking about was likely called the Stanovoy Range in the future. It was a famous mountain range and, in this time period, hadn't been damaged by people. Thus, there were likely a lot of animals and rare plants to be found there.

The northeast's ginseng was quite well-known. If she was lucky and came across some wild ginseng, she could use it with some mystic-stone water and create some medicinal wine and cuisine that could elongate a person's life! Didn't her maidservant Yangliu want to open a restaurant that was even more famous than Zhenxiu Restaurant? They could take an alternate route and open a restaurant that only made medicinal cuisine to nourish a person's body.

The first floor could be the consulting area. They could hire a few famous doctors to take people's pulses and then, after observing every guests' constitution and body condition, recommend some medicinal wines and cuisines. The teas they served to the guests would all be nourishing teas and the wines would all be nourishing medicinal wines. The medicinal food served there would all have the ability to nourish the body. What were the rich most afraid of? Naturally it was to die before they spent their money! There were so many rich merchants, high-ranking officials, noble families, and descendants of the imperial family in the capital. Thus, she didn't have to worry about this new business of hers becoming popular or not!

Zhu Junyang waved his long-fingered hands in front of Yu Xiaocao a few times. She didn't blink a single time and there was a dreamy smile on her face. She looked like she had suddenly seen a massive mountain of gold in front of her and he thought she looked quite amusing. Just what was the little lass daydreaming about again? Did his proposal prompt another money-making idea in that brain of hers?

The little lass always came up with more and more ideas to make money. Now, her family was among the wealthy in the capital. How many years had it been since she got there? If a few more years went by, would she become the richest woman in the capital? By the time he was able to marry her, would other people start suspecting him for going after her immense wealth? After they got married, would his colleagues start to think that he was an idle pretty boy who lived off of his rich wife's money?

Zhu Junyang couldn't help but rub his face at this moment. Argh! He spent a lot of time in the military camps, drilling and doing exercises like all of the other soldiers and officers in the regiment. After a month outside, everyone else had already tanned into a manly and healthy bronze color. His skin, on the other hand, hadn't seemed to have much change at all. In a group of brawny, tan fellows, he looked even more conspicuous. With that added onto the face he had inherited from his mother, didn't he really resemble a pretty boy now?

“Stop touching your face! You're the most beautiful in this entire world, okay ah?!” Yu Xiaocao finally exited her blissful daydream and saw that fellow, who was as pretty as a peacock, touching his handsome face in a narcissistic manner. She flatteringly complimented him. However, all she got in return was that pair of alluring phoenix eyes glaring at her.

She had complimented him for being beautiful but he wasn't the least bit grateful! If someone else had complimented her in that manner, she, an old maiden, would be incredibly happy that she'd forget what direction north pointed! Yu Xiaocao silently cursed him. Suddenly, she inquired, “When we're gathering medicinal herbs and hunting, will Sir Su come with us ah?”

“Sir Su, Sir Su! Just who is he to you to make you always think of him ah?” Zhu Junyang's jealousy immediately exploded. He had had enough recently! As long as Chief Steward Su was around, that lass's eyes would always give off glowing sparks whenever she saw him. The gleeful look in her eyes was even more bright and dazzling than when she was counting money. He couldn't help but sourly think from time to time that if Chief Steward Su wasn't an eunuch with that type of awkward status, would she also fall in love with him at first sight? And treat him lovingly and wholeheartedly?

Yu Xiaocao was not willing to admit that she found Chief Steward Su's elegant beauty to be charming, so she came up with a different explanation, “Sir Su is the envoy sent by the emperor himself and represents imperial power! We naturally must honor and respect him. If we go out on a tour, isn't it polite to ask him if he wants to go? Aren't I right?”

“Hmph! You make it sound like you have some lofty ideal! Do you think this prince doesn't know that the thing you like about Chief Steward Su the most is his looks?!” The jealousy within him didn't abate at all. He grumbled sourly, “Lass, when you were young and tiny, you used to salivate over me all the time. Furthermore, the first time you saw Chief Steward Su, you wished you could stick your eyeballs onto him! Do you have any womanly reserve in you?”

“How am I not reserved ah? Everyone loves beauty and that's a fact! Me showing my appreciation off in a calm manner is much better than those fake fairies who surreptitiously look at others!” Yu Xiaocao was upset by his words. He made it sound like she was woefully smitten!

Zhu Junyang didn't get any consolation from the lass and instead got pushed back by her confidently instead. Even more jealousy bubbled up within him as he clucked his tongue and exclaimed, "Then tell me! Let's pretend our status and positions are the same. If this prince and Chief Steward Su stood in front of you now and you could only pick one person to admire, who would you pick?"

"Obviously I'd pick——" Yu Xiaocao almost blurted her answer out, but when she saw that bewitching handsome man in front of her pretend to act as if he was unperturbed but actually was very interested in her answer, she deliberately elongated her answer. She watched as he listened so intently that his muscles almost bulged out.

She sniggered and didn't give the answer that he was hoping for, "Obviously I'd pick——the most handsome one out of you two!"

"So shallow!!" This was the first time Zhu Junyang had lost confidence in his own looks. He coldly huffed and then continued to ask, "Then tell me, between this prince and Chief Steward Su, which one is more your type?"

"You're asking a girl so directly. It's so embarrassing!" Yu Xiaocao covered up her delicate little face and pretended to be bashful.

Zhu Junyang naturally knew that she wasn't someone who would get embarrassed over something like this. He grabbed onto her shoulder and asked in a serious and somewhat anxious manner, "Stop fooling around, quickly tell me! Who's more good looking?!"

"Alright ah, alright! Didn't I say it earlier? You're the most beautiful in this entire world, alright ah?" Yu Xiaocao's way of saying this made Zhu Junyang feel quite dissatisfied.

He was just about to say something when he heard a gentle and full of doubt voice behind him, "Cao'er, who did you say is the most beautiful?"

Yu Xiaocao slanted her body to the side to look past Zhu Junyang. When she saw the person behind him, her eyes immediately sparkled like a bunch of small stars and the expression on her face became more lively, "Sir Su, earlier, Royal Prince Yang was very jealous of your elegant and graceful demeanor, which

resembles an immortal from a fairy tale. He simply forced me to answer the question of who I found more good-looking between the two of you!”

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Su Ran had long felt the faint aura of animosity Royal Prince Yang had towards him in the past few days. In addition, the prince was becoming more distant. At first, he was quite puzzled by this change. Later on, after some careful observations, he discovered that whenever that lass Xiaocao treated him warmly, the prince's hostility towards him would increase. Only then did he realize that Royal Prince Yang was feeling the bite of jealousy!

Argh! He was pretty sure that, in the whole Great Ming Empire, only Royal Prince Yang would actually consider an already damaged person to be an invisible rival for his sweetheart's affections. When he got back, if he told this to the emperor, Su Ran was pretty sure the other man would laugh until he cried.

A faint smile appeared on Su Ran's face. This slight smile made his face seem even more elegant and ethereal. He was the perfect image of a pure and lofty gentleman. So handsome, so elegant! He was even more like an immortal than those actors who played the main characters in the xianxia dramas. Yu Xiaocao felt like she was truly a bit smitten by his appearance and demeanor!

“Oh! Then, who do you think is more good looking between the two of us ah?” Su Ran's tone had a hint of enticing temptation in it and Zhu Junyang's expression immediately became cold. The prince opened his mouth to stop the little lass from replying.

Unfortunately, Xiaocao had reacted even faster than he had expected. She almost immediately blurted out, “Sir, you and he are both incredibly good looking in your own ways! Each of you have your own styles and both styles have their merits!”

It was important to realize that Chief Steward Su hated people commenting on how good looking he was the most. Apparently, during his youth, he had a few bad experiences all related to his stunning good looks. His handsome appearance had induced a few people to scheme against him for unsavory reasons. In fact, even after he had been rescued and sent into the ranks of the hidden guards, he still had some shadows from those previous experiences.

It was said that when he first entered the palace service, he had caught the eye of a particular member of the imperial family. That person wanted to ask the emperor emeritus to give Su Ran to him as a favored human pet, but Su Ran vehemently refused to go. This caused that member of the imperial family to have a hateful grudge against him, and that member ended up bribing some of the stewards in the family to harm and kill Su Ran. Fortunately, he had been saved by the current emperor when he was

still the heir of Imperial Prince Duan. After that, Su Ran had slowly climbed to the position where he was today.

Not long after the current emperor ascended the throne, Su Ran became the head of the hidden guards and was in charge of the internal affairs of the palace. He had helped the emperor from behind the scenes to handle many disloyal people. As for that particular member of the imperial family, after Su Ran became powerful, he suddenly had a serious illness that caused pus filled sores to grow all over his body. In addition, these ulcers stank to the high heavens. Even the imperial physicians from the palace found themselves unable to figure out where he had gotten this condition from. After lying in bed, struggling to hang onto his life for half a year, he died just like that!

Some people claimed that the pus filled sores that the member from the imperial clan had gotten were related to Chief Steward Su Ran. He had chosen that horrible method to take revenge for his previous insult and dishonor. In addition, other people who had commented or gossiped about Su Ran's looks all ended up having bad outcomes, such as breaking an arm or a leg during some accident. Thus, all of the hedonistic nobles in the capital soon learned to change the subject as soon as someone mentioned Su Ran and refused to say a peep about him.

If anyone else, especially a man, had frankly complimented Su Ran on his looks in the way the little lass did, it was likely that person would already be on the ground and unable to get up again. The injuries inflicted on that person would take at least ten days to half a month before they would heal enough for the person no longer to be bedridden.

However, this time, Chief Steward Su seemed quite pleased by her words and even began to joke with the chilly looking Royal Prince Yang, "It is my honor to be compared to the capital's most famous handsome man who also has an equally bad reputation, Royal Prince Yang!"

"We're both on the same level, ok?!" Zhu Junyang's alluring phoenix eyes met Su Ran's pair of elegant and clear looking eyes. It was clear that there was a competition going on. In terms of reputation, both of them were considered to be calamitous stars in the capital and were on other people's 'do not offend' lists.

However, Royal Prince Yang's bad reputation was mostly on the surface. Since he had highly-skilled bodyguards and Head Steward Liu at his side, when he lost control of himself in the past, at most, he would beat the offender until he was half dead. He had never actually taken an innocent life. Chief Steward Su Ran, on the other hand, acted entirely on his mood at the time. If he thought someone was an eyesore, then he was always able to find a way to torment a person to death without leaving any clues behind. After all, his title as the head of the hidden guards wasn't just for show. Consequently, the

people in the capital were much more wary of him. In terms of bad reputation, his was much more warranted than Royal Prince Yang's!

“However, I thought I heard someone earlier mention that you were planning on going into the mountains to gather herbs and hunt game? I'm quite interested in this, Cao'er. Do I have the honor to come along as well?” Su Ran wasn't too noble to have some petty moments. He obviously knew that Royal Prince Yang didn't want him to come along, so he insisted on following along. The more he could make the other man unhappy, the happier he became.

“Of course! I was just about to ask you earlier to see if you wanted to come or not!” Yu Xiaocao deliberately pretended not to see the rivalry that had appeared between the two men and giddily promised. She was incredibly happy to allow his request.

Su Ran felt incredibly satisfied within his heart when he saw the dark expression on Royal Prince Yang's face! He smiled even more brightly and said, “Then we are in agreement! As soon as you decide to head out, just send someone to let me know. I'm going to go visit that little fellow Black Whirlwind. It should be at the front courtyard begging for food right now!”

Zhu Junyang felt like there was a blazing fire within his heart and the heat from his anger was about to ignite his temper. However, when he looked at his lass, who had a face full of innocence, he couldn't bear to let out his temper to her.

Yu Xiaocao felt that it was simultaneously amusing and a bit pitiful at the same time when she saw steam coming out of his ears. She thought it was a bit pathetic that this outwardly handsome and elegant man had actually been run around in circles by her because of his inexperience with emotions. She needed to soothe him down quickly, so she stepped forward and batted her eyes in a bashful and timid manner. She glanced at his stunningly handsome face and said in a saccharine tone, “Little Junjun, Jun Yangyang~~~don't be angry ah~~~”

“Speak like a normal person!” Zhu Junyang had no temper left after hearing her ridiculous words. Little Junjun, Jun Yangyang, just what were these nonsense names?! However, bubbles of happiness immediately began to surface within his heart.

“Jun Yangyang~the person who I really really like the most is still you, my handsome Little Yangyang~~~” Yu Xiaocao's voice was so sweet that it was almost at the limit. At this point, that outwardly cold but inwardly passionate handsome man in front of her had his ears turn bright red from her antics. Wutong,

as her personal maidservant, also felt goosebumps rise throughout her body after listening to her master's corny statements. She couldn't help but rub her arms after hearing all of this.

Zhu Junyang no longer cared about the irksome third wheel—Wutong, and put his arms around the little lass's slim and tender waist. He pulled her against his body and lowered his head to gaze deeply into her eyes as he questioned in an uncertain manner, "Is that true? Is this prince truly the person you like the most?"

Yu Xiaocao decided that, based on this handsome man's recent actions, she could give him a taste of sweetness. After all, this fellow would definitely show up at her residence to propose marriage at the end of the year. Right now, they were basically considered engaged at this point. She reached her hands up to hug his neck and her little face became a bit flushed. She glanced at Wutong and saw that her maid seemed to have turned away in embarrassment before she hurriedly stood up at her tiptoes and gave her handsome man a quick kiss on his warm lips.

In actuality, Wutong had been paying attention to her master this entire time! Before they left, Lady Fang had warned her many times to make sure she kept an eye on the young miss and to absolutely not allow a particular big wolf to take advantage of her.

After being with her master for such a long time, she had long found out that Royal Prince Yang was only a paper tiger. As long as she worked hard for her mistress, even if Royal Prince Yang found her irksome, he wouldn't do anything against her for the sake of her mistress. Therefore, Wutong's courage had continued to grow. She frequently interrupted Royal Prince Yang's attempts to hold her young miss's hand or hug her in a stern manner. In fact, she often seriously repeated the words that Lady Fang had told her and, for the vast majority of the time, was successful in stopping him.

However, this time, Zhu Junyang had swiftly hugged her master before she could even react. Wutong had just taken a step and was about to say some words to stop them but her own young miss had moved to ruin her attempt.

Lady Fang had only stated that she needed to protect her mistress against Royal Prince Yang and never mentioned what she should do if her own mistress made the first move. Should she pretend that she didn't see anything or be the annoying person butting in between the two lovers? Fortunately, she remembered who she was serving and turned her head around to pretend she didn't see anything. However, she was also worried about her master being taken advantage of, so she continued to watch the two of them out of the corner of her eye. Who would have thought that the one taking advantage of the other person would be her very own mistress!

Wutong's delicately pale face suddenly became dyed red and it was so crimson that it looked like it would start burning at any time. However, she wasn't too frightened in her heart. Ever since she had accompanied her master, she had encountered so many frightening things. She was already used to this!

Yu Xiaocao's lightning fast kiss stunned Zhu Junyang for a second and he missed the best opportunity to 'strike back'. He wasn't satisfied with a paltry peck alone and wanted to kiss her again in a much more passionate manner. However, the little lass had nimbly dodged his attempt.

After forcefully pushing away his rock hard chest, Yu Xiaocao leveled a glare at him and then turned to address Wutong with a pout on her lips, "Why are you just standing here? Are you waiting for something? Let's go ah! Time to pack our bags for the trip into the mountains!"

Zhu Junyang didn't think he could hate Wutong more than right now. This maidservant had interrupted him too many times. Loyalty was one thing but this loyal maid always managed to pop up whenever he wanted to get somewhat intimate with his little lass and wave her authority around to make him stop. He stared at her with an icy-cold glare. If this look of his had substance, Wutong would have long been pierced and heavily injured by it.

Even though it was just a glare, Wutong couldn't help but shiver a bit. When she saw her master turn around to go back to her rooms, she hurriedly trotted after her. She didn't dare to be alone around Royal Prince Yang at this moment because she couldn't guarantee that the youth wouldn't restrain himself and end up strangling her to death! As for the person in question, Zhu Junyang truly had the urge to do so!

The next day, the three of them traveled off with their lightly packed bags and a small escort. Other than the three, they also brought along the full of energy Hou Xiaolang and Xiaocao's two maidservants, Chunhua and Qiushi. They rode their horses towards the east in the direction of 'Jinalin'. Wutong, who had no strength or martial arts, had been firmly ordered behind by Zhu Junyang. He pompously stated that she would only cause them to slow down and bring no benefit to their group.

Wutong also knew that Royal Prince Yang truly found her incredibly annoying and could only inwardly seethe at the indignity as she didn't dare to voice her complaints. However, she needed to protect her master's reputation to the very end. The two maids, Chunhua and Qiushi, had all been given to her master by the prince, so they couldn't be counted on. Hou Xiaoliang was Royal Prince Yang's lackey, so he naturally was unreliable in this aspect. The only person she could throw her hopes on was Chief Steward Su.

Although Chief Steward Su had a stunningly handsome face and a seemingly warm and gentle demeanor, Wutong still felt the hairs on her body rise whenever she was alone around him despite his lack of an actual temper. Her intuition told her that he was even more scary than Royal Prince Yang.

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However, for the sake of her master, she suppressed the fear in her heart and quietly approached Chief Steward Su. She quickly stammered out her purpose for coming to him. Wutong originally believed that it would take more pleading for her to convince him, but Chief Steward Su agreed immediately to her request after she finished speaking.

There was actually a mini version of Su Ran in his heart. The mini version of him had his hands on his hips while smirking evilly, 'Blocking Royal Prince Yang is something I'd love to do. It makes me happy and delighted to do so!'

"Rest assured, Miss Wutong." The smile on Su Ran's handsome face softened as he said, "I will take care of your master and prevent Royal Prince Yang from approaching her."

Chief Steward Su smiled very gently at her, but Wutong could see through his facade. He was like a restless demon that was grinning evilly at her. Although his handsome face looked elegant and refined, his smile made people shiver on the spot...Wutong's heart trembled in fear. She was more terrified of him right now than the time when Royal Prince Yang went crazy.

Along their journey, Su Ran guarded Xiaocao 'responsibly and diligently'. He and Zhu Junyang stood on either side of the young girl to protect her, making sure that they were never more than five steps away from her. Su Ran had gone beyond the borders before on his missions, so he had a good understanding of the local conditions, customs, and folklore. Su Ran made many witty comments along the journey, so Yu Xiaocao's attention was always on him. Whenever he saw Royal Prince Yang's jealous gaze directed at him, Su Ran felt as if he had drunk a freezing cold beverage in the hottest periods of summer. It was an extremely refreshing feeling.

Zhu Junyang had long wanted to pull the obnoxious Chief Steward Su to the side and 'learn from each other'. Even though he may not be as skilled as his opponent, he still wanted to spar with him and vent out his frustrations. Chief Steward Su was definitely doing this on purpose!! Every time he wanted to introduce the scenery, customs, or even an interesting story to his little lass, that guy would always intercept his conversation.

Zhu Junyang never realized that Chief Steward Su was such an eloquent speaker until now. Unlike other damned palace eunuchs who had ear-piercing voices, Su Ran had a gentle voice. His voice was as gentle and pleasant to the ear as a spring breeze. Zhu Junyang knew that, in addition to being attracted to a handsome appearance, the little lass also liked people who had a beautiful and pleasant voice. Normally, his little lass would fall into a trance due to his deep and graceful voice. He was quite happy about that.

However, it was a completely different matter when she fell into a trance from other people's voices. Zhu Junyang's heart was stinging painfully; it was like his heart had been scratched by the sharp claws of a dozen vicious cats. The most important point was that Su Ran's storytelling ability far surpassed his. The back of the little lass's head was facing him as she listened with interest to Chief Steward Su's legend about "Jin A'Lin".

"Cao'er, I also know this story. I can tell it to you..." Zhu Junyang continued to persist as he tried to draw the little lass's attention back to himself. He had been given the cold shoulder the entire time.

Yu Xiaocao didn't even turn her head around and said, "The stories you tell are dry and uninteresting! Sir Su's story is fascinating and he's a great storyteller. Only a fool would listen to your stories! When you return, you should properly read more books and study hard. Be obedient~"

Zhu Junyang deflated once again. By now, he was extremely depressed, but he had no other strategy left to try. Suddenly, an idea hit him, and he interrupted their 'storytelling session' and said, "Cao'er, didn't you want to see my skills? I didn't have an opponent that could match me before, so I couldn't show you. But now, we have Chief Steward Su here. Why don't I spar with him and show you who the real expert is?"

He originally thought that the little lass's eyes would brighten and readily agree to his proposal, but she didn't react as he expected. Xiaocao looked back and forth between Chief Steward Su and Su Ran. Then, with a frown on her face, she slowly shook her head and said, "I think it's better if you don't! I don't want to see the two of you with a bloody nose and a swollen face walking around me after the fight. I like this pleasing and delightful view right now!"

Su Ran smothered the chuckle that almost escaped from him. He looked up at Zhu Junyang and gave him a provocative glance: 'Luckily, you managed to escape a calamity. If you challenge my patience again, then I will make sure to beat up your face until it looks like an ugly pig and humiliate you in front of the little girl.'

Zhu Junyang's temper almost exploded by the provocative glance that Su Ran gave him. However, his sanity was soon restored when his gaze met the little lass's clean and pure gaze. Had his opponent been anyone else, then he was sure to beat them until they fell onto the ground without being injured himself. However, in front of Chief Steward Su, he only had 20% chance of winning in his violent state. If he fought Su Ran right now, he would only be abused and beaten. Alas! He couldn't beat him in either material arts or literature. Did he really have nothing that could compete against Chief Steward Su?

On a certain evening, while they were spending the night in a grove, Zhu Junyang set up a tent and a thick sheepskin mattress for his little lass with the help from his imperial bodyguard, Hou Xiaoliang. After that, he tugged the little lass around the temporary 'hotel' he built for her. Then, he secretly asked her, "Do you have any powerful sleeping drugs? I need it urgently!"

Yu Xiaocao was quick-witted and immediately frowned at his request. She looked at him disapprovingly and said in a reproaching tone, "Don't tell me you're planning on using the drugs on Sir Su? I've always thought you were an upright and honorable man. I didn't expect you to actually use such underhanded means! I'm thoroughly disappointed in you! Sir Su is a humorous, charming, and easy-going person. Why must you always cause trouble for him?"

"That's right! He's humorous, charming, and easy-going! In contrast, I'm dumb, boring, weird, and wretched! Why don't you ask yourself why I always cause trouble for him? If you treated me better and paid more attention to me than him, then why would I trouble myself to cause him trouble?!" Zhu Junyang's lowered voice was brimming with rage and grievances.

Yu Xiaocao found the situation to be quite funny, but she still felt sorry for him. She cupped Zhu Junyang's beautiful face that was brimming with anger with her hands. She sighed softly and said, "Why are you so insecure? Think about it, you are Royal Prince Yang, a proud son of heaven, with a royal background and high status. You are also highly valued by the emperor! You are tall in stature with an appearance that can even rival the celestials in heaven! In contrast, I am just a small girl from a farming village. I just know some money-making methods. My appearance is not extraordinarily beautiful, and I have an odd character and a weird temperament...in other people's eyes, I'm the one who climbed up the social ladder. I should be the one clinging onto you! So, how did you become the one who started becoming worried about losing me?"

"That's because...I care about you. I care more about you than you care about me! You're a little lass with no conscience!" Zhu Junyang gnashed his teeth as he said, "I have been waiting for you for years, but have you ever promised me anything? Have you ever given me a precise answer to my feelings? You always act so ambiguous around me. Tell me, are you just treating me like a dog that you can play around with any time?"

“That's because you're stupid!” Since there was no one else nearby, Yu Xiaocao was unrestrained with her words, “Do I act like a loose girl in your eyes? If I didn't acknowledge your feelings for me, would I have let you touch my hand from time to time? Would I have let you hug me and kiss me when other people aren't looking? If you dare to say no, then this young lady here will clear your scores and give you all zeros during my observation period! I will set up a household headed by a female in the future and live alone for the rest of my life!!”

When he heard the anger in Xiaocao's words, Zhu Junyang immediately softened his approach. He smiled and carefully said, “Fine! It's all my fault for being too stupid. I failed to interpret your actions, so I should apologize to you. Please don't be angry! You know that I'm relatively slow in this respect. If you had told me this earlier, then my mind would've been put to ease and I wouldn't have carelessly become jealous. Furthermore, you were acting very friendly towards Chief Steward Su compared to me before. As a man, it's natural for me to feel uneasy and it's impossible for me to control it.”

“I called you stupid as a joke, but it turns out that you really are stupid! Don't you know that the closer two people are, the more casual their interactions become? For example, I act cute and flatter the emperor emeritus, the emperor, and the empress from time to time. They are our superiors, so we need to coax and amuse them to appease them! Sir Su is a special correspondent sent by our superiors to accompany us on the mission. Should I follow your example and give him the cold shoulder too? When I first met Sir Su, I felt that we got along quite well. The way I treat him is no different from the way I treat my elders and nothing more!”

Zhu Junyang muttered softly, “Chief Steward Su is only a few years older than me. He's at most in his early thirties, and he has a youthful appearance. How would I have known that you treat him like an elder?”

However, he recalled that Xiaocao was only eleven to twelve years old when she first met Chief Steward Su, who was twenty-seven to twenty-eight years old. In the past, wasn't it common for people at the eunuch's age in rural villages to have children around Xiaocao's age? His face blushed with shame at those thoughts.

“Okay! Now that we've cleared things up, you won't act uncourteous towards Sir Su again in the future, right?” Yu Xiaocao squeezed his flawless cheek. Oh, his cheeks felt nice to touch!

This bold little lass! Except for the time when he was still an infant, who would've ever dared to squeeze his face like this? Her soft and supple small hands cupped his cheeks, warming them up. The little girl's

almond-shaped eyes sparkled when she pinched his cheeks. In addition to their ambiguous position, the two people were alone in the tent—causing Zhu Junyang's eyes to darken.

“If you kiss me, I will listen to everything you say in the future!” Zhu Junyang puckered his lips at Xiaocao. His puckered lips looked like a chicken's butt.

“I don't want to! I have just deducted ten points from your observation period record book. I have extended the observation period, so all intimate actions will be prohibited in the future! That includes holding hands!” Yu Xiaocao pushed away his handsome face that was inching towards her face.

“Don't do that! I have already reflected on my actions and corrected it in time. The ancient ones said: If you realize your mistakes, then you can correct them. There is nothing better than acknowledging and changing after realizing your mistakes! Give me a chance to change!” There was a small hand that covered his face and pushed him back. But he continued to push forward, and as a result, his handsome facial features were squished together into a deformed appearance. It was ugly to the extreme!

“Young Lady Yun said: You should be punished if you make a mistake. You can't haggle over your punishment! Step aside! Do you think you can do whatever you please because Wutong is not here?” Yu Xiaocao was strict.

Zhu Junyang blinked his charming phoenix eyes at her incessantly and even looked at her flirtatiously. He looked at her affectionately and said, “Let's take advantage of her absence and kiss me. Just once would be enough for me!”

Yu Xiaocao acted like she was not someone that could be seduced by beauty and said, “We absolutely cannot do that! Who are you to me? How can I allow you to kiss and do as you please with me?”

Fields of Gold Chapter 584

“After the New Year passes, I will send someone to your family to propose marriage. After that, you will become my special someone. But before that, why don't you let me have a small taste of you?” Zhu Junyang pestered her shamelessly. He only had one goal—to get close with her.

“Do you think I will agree to your proposal just because you asked? You have yet to pass your observation period and your observation period has been extended. As for how long it will be extended, it will all depend on my mood!” Yu Xiaocao refused to yield even an inch to him and planned on properly teaching this guy a lesson!

Zhu Junyang pondered for a moment and then put on an act like he was an abandoned and heartbroken puppy. When Xiaocao let her guard down, he suddenly wrapped his arms around her delicate, soft, and slim body, confining her two arms on the left and right side of her body. He smiled slyly at his success and said, "I've caught you! Give me a kiss, just one kiss!" He leaned his face towards her as he spoke.

"Ahem! Cough cough!" An untimely voice suddenly flowed towards them at the door of the tent. The darkness in the tent gradually faded as the bright light poured in from the door of the open tent.

Zhu Junyang reluctantly released the fuming little girl in his embrace. He clenched his teeth as he turned to stare at the familiar figure standing by the door of the tent. He wished he could tear that person into pieces. He gnashed his teeth and asked, "May I ask why Chief Steward Su is here?"

"It's nothing really, I just wanted to check on Xiaocao since she hasn't come out from the tent for a while!" Su Ran raised his eyebrows at him provocatively, but, when he turned to face Xiaocao, there was only a gentle smile on his face, "Xiaocao, I have hunted a male deer just now. The quality of the antler is quite good, so I came here to ask you if you want it."

"Yes, I want it!" Yu Xiaocao took this opportunity to kick Zhu Junyang's lower waist, climbed out of the tent, and walked up to the large sika deer. She instructed Hou Xiaoliang to help her cut off the sika deer's antlers. She also put the deer penis and deer blood inside her luggage. These medicinal ingredients are very effective when used to treat certain symptoms of andrology. Once she made it into medicine, she was certain that its stocks would sell smoothly in the capital.

Zhu Junyang couldn't help but frown when he saw how enthusiastic she was while she instructed people to tidy up the deer: Was the little lass suspicious of his capabilities in bed? Was she preparing ahead of time for their future happiness? He didn't need it at all, okay? His physical strength and energy were extremely good, okay? If she didn't believe him...then she could try him out?

Zhu Junyang had just coaxed the little lass, so he didn't dare to stroke the tiger's whiskers by voicing his thoughts out loud. He was parched after eating roasted venison, but he could only lean pitifully against the tree and watch the small tent from afar. The quiet breathing sound from the small tent made him unable to sleep all night.

Su Ran was resting on one of the thick branches on the tree not far from him. He would glance at him mockingly from time to time. Zhu Junyang had nowhere to vent his anger, and now all the bottled-up

anger throughout the day exploded. He dragged Chief Steward Su to a distant place from their camp and fought three hundred rounds with him. Cough. Cough. It was purely a spar to compare their martial arts; it was not what you were thinking!

Xiaocao was awakened by the birds' chirping the next day. She was feeling quite refreshed when she walked out of her tent, but she was immediately startled by the 'giant panda' above her. If she remembered correctly, they were currently in Northeast China, not Sichuan. Why was the country's national treasure here? But upon closer inspection of the 'giant panda', she realized that it was merely Zhu Junyang who was in a bad mood. Each of Zhu Junyang's eyes was beaten up, donning matching symmetrical bruises.

"Oh my! What happened? Did you develop those dark circles under your eyes because you didn't sleep well last night?" Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but tease him.

Zhu Junyang narrowed his swollen phoenix eyes at her and handed her the toiletries in his hand. He gently tapped her head a few times and said with his silver tongue, "I ate too much venison last night, so I was parched. Last night, I kept tossing and turning while I tried to sleep because I was thinking of you all night. As a result, I became like this! You are the main culprit!"

Yu Xiaocao burst out laughing, and her crisp laughter startled the birds that were perched on the nearby trees. She went into her bag and took out a small bottle that smelled of medicinal herbs. She opened the lid and scooped out a green gelatin textured ointment and helped him apply it around his eyes.

A cool and refreshing feeling quickly spread around his swollen eyes. After the little lass finished, Zhu Junyang could already feel that most of the swelling and pain around his eyes had faded away. He was certain that it was not an illusion.

"Your ointment is very effective; I will be taking it." Zhu Junyang shamelessly took the small porcelain bottle from her and raised his eyebrows somewhat proudly at the white silhouette in the distance.

Yu Xiaocao applied some mint-flavored tooth powder on her toothbrush and carefully brushed her small teeth. This tooth powder was a product that had recently been launched by 'Blossoming Beauty'. It was much more effective than the green salt that noble ladies usually used to brush their teeth. Not only did it taste sweet, but it also helped whiten the teeth. The mint fragrance that remained in the mouth after someone finished brushing their teeth kept their breath fresh and clean all day long!

Soon after this product was launched, the upper-class ladies and nobles rushed to her shop like ducks for this product. Even the menfolk in their family would secretly use their tooth powder to brush their teeth. As a result, the ladies would often notice that they were running out of the tooth powder when they were brushing their teeth.

Without any other choice, the noble ladies would buy a box for everyone else in the family the next time they visited Xiaocao's shop. Even the young children of the houses received them. The young children used the sweet fruit-flavored tooth powders instead of the mint-flavored ones. There were a total of five different flavors, all of which were deeply loved by children.

On this journey, Xiaocao had brought seven to eight cases of tooth powder, and it was enough to last more than half a year. However, on the way here, Zhu Junyang and Sir Su each robbed a case from her. If they stayed in this horse farm for a year, there wouldn't be enough tooth powder for the three of them!

She used warm water to wash her face, then she applied some moisturizing skincare on her skin. Xiaocao was acting a little narcissistic as she touched her tender and bouncy skin. Compared to the young ladies in the capital, Xiaocao's appearance was only average, but the condition of her skin was unrivaled. The young ladies that she frequently played with all envied her skin. They said that her skin looked so moist that water could probably be squeezed out of her skin!

She recalled the time when she first transmigrated here. Her whole family had yellow and dry skin, like a bunch of starving refugees. Even though her family members' skin could not be compared to hers, their skin was still rosy, healthy, and moist now. The daily maintenance of one's skin was very important.

“Little lass, do you have any skincare products that are suitable for me?” When he saw how his little lass's skin was almost transparent under the morning sun, a sense of crisis abruptly arose in Zhu Junyang's heart. He touched his face. Although his face was not rough, it was far inferior compared to the little lass's skin. He was already seven to eight years older than Xiaocao. If he didn't take good care of his skin, would he be mistaken as the little lass's father if they went out together in the future?

Yu Xiaocao was calmly drinking the fragrant and sweet glutinous rice congee and chewing marinated cucumbers. But when she heard his question, she almost choked on her breakfast. She forced herself to swallow the congee in her mouth and looked at him like she had just seen a ghost, “Jun Yangyang, are you being possessed by a lonely spirit from the wild? I gave you a set of men's skincare products, but you bestowed it to one of your subordinates because you said skincare products were products for women. So, why did you suddenly ask me about men's skincare? What made you upset to the point that you asked this question?”

"I'm upset by you!" Zhu Junyang gnawed on a bite of dried meat and chewed it vigorously, "I only have this handsome face that can attract you. If I become ugly one day, wouldn't you abandon me? Stop talking nonsense and just tell me whether there is any!"

"Jun Yangyang, you're being too modest!" Yu Xiaocao examined his face carefully for a while before she said, "To tell you the truth, your skin is in pretty good shape. But because you often stay outdoors, your skin lacks moisture. I have a bottle of immortal water. You just need to apply a layer of it on your skin after you wash your face every day. I promised you that you will look magnificent and dominate all other men in terms of appearance in three days!"

"Get lost! Why would I want to dominate a group of men? If I want to dominate, then I will dominate a group of women!!" Zhu Junyang rolled his eyes at her.

Yu Xiaocao took out a small porcelain bottle and looked at him with a smile yet not a smile. She made sure to emphasize every word as she spoke, "Oh? Royal Prince Yang has such a big appetite for wanting to dominate a 'group' of women! Humph, what a womanizer!!"

Zhu Junyang hurriedly clarified his mistake and said, "Don't nitpick at my words. I merely followed after what you had just said. Little lass, I haven't even settled your score yet for teasing me and you're already trying to counter-attack with my words."

Yu Xiaocao cutely stuck out her tongue at him and grabbed the dried piece of meat from his hand. She took a large bite of the dried meat and chewed. Zhu Junyang took the small porcelain bottle from her and uncorked it. A calming fragrance emerged from the porcelain bottle. It was the same scent that Xiaocao exuded all year round, could it be...

"Does this have something to do with that stupid stone?" Zhu Junyang saw that Su Ran was standing quite far from them, so he leaned towards Xiaocao's ears and whispered the question in her ear, making sure that only she could hear him.

[You're a stupid stone!] A golden ray of light shot out from Xiaocao's wrist. Along with the divine stone's words, Zhu Junyang's body suddenly became numb all over and for a moment, he lost all ability to control his body. If he had met a martial arts expert, this moment of inability would have cost him his life.

[This divine stone was created in the ancient time and trusted by Goddess Nuwa. You are a mere mortal, yet you dare to act so disrespectfully towards this divine stone. This divine stone will allow you to reflect over your mistakes, so don't repeat this mistake again next time, or else I will not forgive you as easily as this time!]

The golden light materialized into a palm-sized golden cat. It walked up to him proudly and took the last piece of dried meat from his hand and rewarded it to Little Black who was drooling by the side!

Since they were hunting deep in the mountains, how could she not bring Little Black and Little White? They were able to single-handedly fight a tiger and together, the two of them can even fight against black bears!

Su Ran walked towards them with a bowl of rice. He was a true southerner because he liked rice more than pancakes, steamed buns, and steamed stuffed buns. The rice they brought along was Japonica rice. It was thin, slightly green, translucent, and had a captivating aroma. A person could still eat a full bowl of this rice even without side dishes like vegetables and meat.

This type of rice was known as Green Essence Rice in ancient times. It was actually produced by one of the ordinary provincial counties around the capital. Perhaps it was because of the county's geography and climate, but the Japonica rice could only be grown there. However, the Japonica rice they brought along their trip was produced in the Imperial Plantation. It was able to successfully grow there thanks to Xiaocao's handiwork.

Not only did the Japonica rice grown by Xiaocao taste better, but it also had great health benefits. Unfortunately, the Japonica rice grown in the Imperial Plantation was only offered as a tribute to the imperial court and was not sold to the public. In the rice market, people could only buy ordinary Japonica rice. The food produced by the Imperial Plantation was used to supply the masters in the imperial palace and the majority of it was used as rewards to be bestowed upon meritorious officials of the court.

As for meritorious officials of the court, there were two of them present on this trip. With Official Yu and Royal Prince Yang present on this journey, they will never lack Japonica rice.

Fields of Gold Chapter 585

When she saw the jade pearl rice, Yu Xiaocao suddenly had the desire to make onigiri. Inside the cooked rice, she added dried meat, crispy melon, ham and some nuts to it. The combination, when chewed, felt

very tasty and rich. For Su Ran, this was the first time he had eaten something so novel and he ended up accidentally eating too much. Thus, he had to walk around the vicinity later to aid in digestion.

Zhu Junyang also thought this method of eating was quite interesting and tasty. In the future, the army could add on ready-made onigiri as another type of ration to their supplies. Onigiri contained both rice and other ingredients. As long as you heated them up a bit, they could fill the stomach and they also tasted quite good!

After traveling for another day, they finally arrived at a tiny village at the foot of the wild and flourishing mountain. The word 'tiny' truly wasn't an exaggeration. The village only had around seven to eight families in it, and they were all hunting families. In the winter, wild and vicious beasts often came down to attack the villages around the mountain. Thus, right before it was about to snow for the first time, the villagers would all move about fifty kilometers away to live in town. When spring came again, only then would they come back to their village and begin their planting.

Spring was the season for all of the animals to breed and flourish. Thus, the hunters all had an unspoken rule to not hunt animals that had babies with them, were young, or those that were heavily injured. The fall was the busy season for the hunters. At this time of year, all of the prey was plump and numerous, with glossy fur and high-quality meat. Furthermore, the animals moved around quite a bit at this time so it was more convenient to encounter them on a hunt.

Yu Xiaocao and the others arrived at this somewhat shabby-looking small village. Inside the village, there were only the old, young, and women left behind. All of their adult men had gone into the mountain to hunt. Although the hunters only dared to hunt on the outskirts of the mountain, the forest in that area stretched for hundreds of kilometers. Thus, the men only came back to the village once every ten to fourteen days.

When the elderly and women in the village saw the group of people with their large horses, splendid clothing and imposing demeanors, they knew that they weren't ordinary folks. Even their bodyguards and maidservants were dressed in such a way that showed that their masters had an extraordinary rank. Thus, these villagers only dared to watch them from afar and even made sure to keep their children and grandchildren close by, in order to avoid inadvertently offending these noble personages and bringing disaster upon themselves.

Although the elderly and women had curiosity written on their faces, there was no sign of timidity among them. After all, these were all the families of tough hunters. Even the women and elders were able to pick up weapons and fight when needed.

Out of the entire group, Yu Xiaocao looked the most harmless. Thus, she volunteered herself to negotiate with one of the villagers to use their home as a temporary resting place for them. She headed towards the largest residence that was in the village and had a bright and warm smile on her face. She spoke genially towards the elder and child who stood in front of the doors and said, "Old Grandfather, it's nice to meet you! We're merely passing through the area and it's getting dark. We would like to rest at your gracious abode. Do you think we'd be able to?"

The old man's hair and beard had gone completely white with age but his body was still strong and hale. His back was straight and his complexion was ruddy with health. There was a scar running across his forehead that he had most likely gotten from a hunting injury in his youth, but it didn't make him look scary. The young boy next to him looked to be around ten years old and also looked quite strong. The boy held a hunting knife in his hand and had a wary look on his face.

The old man observed her minutely. He saw that the young maiden in front of him had bright and pure eyes with a brilliant smile on her face. He returned a genial smile and said, "You all are here to hunt, right? I won't hide it from you. Every year, our village will get a few noble guests like yourselves who are here to tour the mountains and hunt game. If you noble folks don't mind our crude situations, then please stay here ah!"

"Grandfather!" The little boy didn't seem to welcome them at all as the expression on his face showed that he rejected them. It would be hard to blame him. After all, not everyone was easy to get along with. Generally, the more noble and highly-ranked the people were, the more issues they had. Last time, when they had housed some noble young maidens and masters, those people regarded everything around them with obvious disdain. They even claimed that the food that was served to them was only fit to feed pigs!

The people in front of them looked a lot more difficult to get along with than their past guests, especially that man who was dressed entirely in black riding on a black horse. That man had an expression on his face as if everyone owed him a couple hundred taels and his eyes were like knives. He didn't even dare to meet that person's eyes! As for the man dressed entirely in white, although he had a smile on his face, the smile didn't reach his eyes, so he clearly wasn't someone to tussle with either. Out of the six people in this group, only the young older sister in front of him seemed easy to communicate with. His grandfather was already of an advanced age and his mother was sick in bed. He truly didn't want to serve these people and end up not even getting a word of gratitude back!

The old man lowered his head to look at his young grandson and rubbed his head. These noble folks had headed towards their residence as soon as they entered the village. If they refused them without a good

reason, wouldn't that end up offending them to their detriment? That being said, he had lived for many years and had a good eye for people. Instinctually, he could tell that this group of people weren't the type to throw around their wealth and rank for no reason or bully the common people.

“Honored, noble guests, please head inside!” He commanded his young grandson, “Take these guests and their horses to the stable in the back of the residence. Make sure their animals get some fodder and water...”

“There's no need to trouble this young fellow. Just tell me the general direction of the building. We brought along fodder for our animals!” Yu Xiaocao wanted to minimize the amount of trouble they caused for these people, so she tactfully refused the old man's good intentions.

The little boy sneered slightly and muttered quietly, “What do you mean by 'troubling us'? You may have brought your own fodder along but did you also bring your own water too?”

“Xiaohu!” The old man reprimanded his grandson and smiled apologetically at Xiaocao and the others. When he saw that they didn't look angry, it confirmed his initial impressions of the group.

Jin Xiaohu puffed up his cheeks and reluctantly led them towards the shed for the animals. His family's residence looked very similar to the residence Xiaocao's Family had in Dongshan Village prior to their upgrades. It was a decently sized courtyard residence and had a five-room main building. The two side courtyards contained three-room buildings. The shack sheltering their draft animals was on the left side from where they first entered and there was already a strong and hale looking donkey hitched in there.

After the group of six's horses had all been led into the shelter, the originally large and spacious shack seemed much more crowded now. That large donkey had been squeezed into the corner by Fierce Wind and Little Red and regarded the other strange 'guests' timidly.

Hou Xiaoliang retrieved the fodder and fed the horses until they were full. Little Red still acted spoiled towards Xiaocao and managed to beg a few pieces of rock candy to eat. When it saw Fierce Wind staring at it pitifully, it magnanimously gave the black horse a piece of candy to eat. As for the large donkey on the side, who was salivating over its leftover fodder, Little Red revealed a look full of disdain at this 'country bumpkin'. 'How is it ah? You've never had anything like this before, right? As for me, I've eaten this since I was young and sometimes feel sick of it!'

They left Hou Xiaoliang there to take care of their picky horses. Yu Xiaocao and Zhu Junyang had been invited to enter the living area. The old man gave them a brief tour of the residence, introducing the various parts of the house. Although their space seemed large and they had a lot of rooms, they also had quite a few people in their family. His sons, grandsons, and other elderly folks altogether came out to be nine people. Other than Xiaohu, who was by his side, the rest of the men had gone into the mountain. As for his daughters-in-law, other than his third daughter-in-law, who was ill in bed, the rest of them had gone to the wastelands at the foot of the mountain to harvest the corn they had planted there.

Last year, his eldest son had waited in line for a whole day and night at the grain store in town in order to buy the corn seeds that were rumored to produce a thousand catties per mu during harvest. After they finished their summer harvest, they followed the instruction booklet and planted the corn seeds. Although the land at the foot of the mountains was a bit infertile, the corn that grew out of it didn't seem to be affected by the poor quality soil.

Clearly, this type of crop wasn't very picky. Their about one mu of land had all grown very well and the corn ears were quite large and plump. Although he didn't have much experience in planting crops, he could tell that the yield from this crop wouldn't be very small! They had just reached the harvest season but all of his sons were in the mountains. Fortunately, his daughters-in-law were all hard workers. As soon as it was light out, they set out to the fields to harvest corn.

The other families in the village all kept an eye on them to see how their one mu of corn planting went. They all said that if their family had a good harvest, then, at the start of spring next year, they also planned on going into town to stand in line to buy seeds. That way, the money they had carefully saved throughout the year could be used to buy seeds and improve their families' circumstances.

"Cough cough...Father, we have guests here? I'll go make some food..." A sickly matron with a yellow complexion walked out of one of the side rooms after supporting herself at the door sill. She had one hand on her chest as she coughed incessantly. Yu Xiaocao noticed that her face was turning red from the effort and that her breathing was labored. She guessed that this woman likely had something wrong with her bronchioles or lungs.

"Mother, you haven't gotten better yet. Quickly go back and lie down. They brought their own servants, so if they want to eat anything, they can make it themselves ah!" Jin Xiaohu stepped forward and supported the woman. He used his small body to help his mother support herself. As he walked her back to the room, he even looked back to glare angrily at Xiaocao and the others.

The old man hurriedly tried to explain the actions of his grandson, "My daughter-in-law had gotten a chill from the wind a few days ago. She refused to go see the doctor and insisted on staying at home,

nursing herself with some common medicine. Yesterday night she ran a fever. Xiaohu is worried about his mother. Guests, please don't take it to heart!"

Yu Xiaocao reckoned that this woman's fever likely worsened her respiratory issues, so she took out a bottle of pills that were used to treat chills and respiratory ailments. She handed it over and said, "These are pills from Tongren Medicine Hall and are used to treat chills and lung ailments. It also can treat coughs and fevers. You should have Auntie take one pill at each meal. After taking it for three days, she should feel much better."

Xiaocao still had quite a bit of confidence in the pills that she personally made.

"Medicinal pills from Tongren Medicine Hall?" The old man repeatedly waved a hand in refusal. He had gone to the prefectural city to sell fur pelts awhile ago and had walked past Tongren Medicine Hall. There had been many people in line there, waiting to buy medicines. The people said that their pills and syrups cost a few hundred taels per bottle and, despite the high price, were still often sold out. Every time new stock came in, it would very quickly disappear after people scrambled to buy some. The pills and syrups all had an expiration date of one year or later. Any family who had some money would always have some at home. It was better to be prepared!

The tiny bottle of pills in front of him likely cost a few hundred taels. His whole family was good at hunting but, at most, they could make thirty to fifty taels a year. When they were lucky and were able to kill an animal that had a rare pelt of fur, they could sell it for around a hundred taels. Their whole family would need to save money for many years before they could afford to buy such an expensive bottle of pills!

"We were fated to meet by chance, so please take it. Just take it as our rental fees for the next few days! Auntie's illness should not go on any longer without being treated properly. Otherwise, a small illness could become much more serious." Yu Xiaocao stuffed the bottle full of pills into the old man's hands before asking, "Old Sir, where will we lodge tonight? We should unpack our luggage first and then begin to make food. I'm not going to lie to you. We've been camping outside for the past few days and we've started to long for some properly cooked food."

The old man saw that she was sincere in her actions and didn't try to refuse anymore. He handed the bottle of pills to his grandson, who was already impatient to leave. As soon as Jin Xiaohu got the pills, he didn't even say a word of thanks before running into the room where his mother was resting to retrieve some warm water before giving her medication.

Old Man Jin shook his head and solemnly thanked them before he brought the whole group to the three-roomed building on the east side. The smile on his face became more sincere as he said, "This three-roomed building normally doesn't have people living in it. You all can first place your luggage here. In a bit, when my three daughters-in-law come back, I'll have them help you clean things up. Xiaohu'zi, quickly go to the back courtyard and pick some vegetables so we can start the fire and help the guests make food!"

"No need, no need! We will do things ourselves!" Without waiting for Xiaocao's command, Chunhua and Qiushi began to clean up the rooms. The east building had three rooms. Zhu Junyang and Su Ran were assigned to one, Xiaocao and her two maidservants were in another, while the last one was for Hou Xiaoliang, who had gotten lucky this time and had his own room.

When Old Man Jin's three daughters-in-law came back with baskets full of corn on their backs, they had already finished cleaning and organizing the three rooms. The beds had been made with their own bedding and Yu Xiaocao took her two maidservants to the kitchen to begin cooking. They made a large pot of preserved meat with rice and stir fried some old string beans with stewed meat. In addition, they also made simmered eggplant casserole, stir fried old cucumbers, and spicy and sour cabbage. The portion sizes of all of the dishes were quite large and was enough to feed their group as well as Old Man Jin's family. After all, they couldn't just make the host family wait to eat just because they borrowed their kitchen, right?

When she saw that Old Man Jin's three daughters-in-law had to haul back giant baskets of corn after working an entire day in the fields, she instructed Hou Xiaoliang to bring two of the more gentle horses to help them bring their harvest back. After getting their host's permission, she picked out some more tender ears of corn from their basket and boiled them to eat.

The sweet smell of cooked corn lured Xiaohu, who had been taking care of his mother this entire time, out of the room. He sidled by the kitchen and lightly sniffed the air with his nose. Not only did the smell of tasty preserved meat hit his nose, but he also identified a new, sweet and savory odor. It made the saliva pool in his mouth.

Yu Xiaocao took out a just cooked ear of corn from the pot and waved it in the air to cool it a bit before she beckoned the young boy over, "Xiaohu, come here and try your family's corn. See if it tastes good or not."

When Jin Xiaohu found out this corn was planted by his family, he didn't try to be polite and took the corn back to the room, "Mother, are you feeling better ah? It's already been two days since you last ate. Eat some corn to fill your stomach first. In a bit, I'll go help Eldest Aunt to make supper."

“Corn?” Xiaohu's mother had slept a bit after taking a pill and now felt much better. Her chest no longer felt as tight as before and she already had an appetite again. She took the ear of corn from her son and asked, “Did you eat any yet?”

“That noble young maiden boiled many ears, so I'll go grab some more later. Eat this first, okay? This is the corn that our family grew and it smells quite delicious. It must be good!” Jin Xiaohu secretly swallowed down his saliva and coaxed his mother to eat.

Xiaohu's mother broke the ear in two and handed him half. She only began to gnaw on the corn in her hands after she saw him happily eating his share. The corn was soft and tender underneath their teeth. The more they chewed, the tastier it became. Even Xiaohu's mother couldn't help but eat bite after bite. After she inadvertently finished her portion of corn, she finally realized just how delicious it was.

“Mother, it looks like noble guests that are here this time aren't the same as the ones we had last time. Although the man dressed in black doesn't look like someone we should offend, their servants haven't tried to bully or walk all over us. As for that young maiden who has skin as white as snow, she doesn't have any of the airs or arrogance of a noble family's young miss. She even personally went into the kitchen to make food! I peeked in there earlier and saw that she made a lot of food. There's a layer of preserved meat on top of the rice they cooked and they also made big portions of the other dishes. The spread is even better than what we eat during the New Years.”

After Xiaohu finished eating his corn, he took his mother's finished cob and threw it into a corner in the courtyard. There were hens over there and they clucked excitedly over the new food.

“The fact that they just gave us these medicinal pills for free shows us that they're not bad people. We're only a mere hunter's family and have nothing of worth for them to covet. These people must have good hearts, so we must remember their kindness.” Xiaohu's mother gently stroked her son's head and smilingly advised him.

“Then...I'll go see if the traps we set earlier have any game in them. If they do, should I give them to the guests to add to their meal?” Jin Xiaohu no longer felt as resentful as he did earlier towards Xiaocao and the others. However, he still felt a bit conflicted inside.

However, as soon as he exited the room, he discovered that the courtyard had an additional two giant, monstrous animals— one black and one white wolf? Or were they dogs? One of them had a still twitching roe deer in its mouth while the other had a gray bird.

“Are...are these two animals your pets?” Jin Xiaohu watched as those two placed their caught prey in front of the maiden dressed in pink like they were presenting treasures. Then, the two large creatures lay down in front of her, acting cute and begging for pets. Their actions didn't suit their large and ferocious looking exteriors at all.

Yu Xiaocao raised her head and saw that Jin Xiaohu had a face full of bewildered alarm and also a bit of anticipation. She grinned at him, “That's right ah! Don't judge these two foolish ones by their appearances. Without their owner's command, they won't harm anyone. Especially Little Black, he's the good-natured one of the two. You can pet him if you like!”

The stupid roe deer that Little Black brought back suddenly jumped up from the ground and began to scramble around the courtyard in a panic. Little Black violently jumped over and used one claw to powerfully press the roe deer onto the ground until it couldn't budge. Only after that episode did Jin Xiaohu discover that the prey that these two brought back didn't have a single injury on them. As for the dusty gray bird that had been brought back by the white wolf, it was still calling out on occasion.

“Oh ho! It's a hazel grouse ah! The sky has hazel grouse meat while the ground has donkey meat. Miss, you all are quite lucky today!” Old Man Jin had gone back and forth two times to help his family move the corn, and they had finished harvesting about one mu's worth of corn. The corn had been piled in the courtyard. Old Man Jin made a quick estimate and was pretty sure that their harvest had exceeded a thousand catties. This year, they would be able to save quite a bit of money that was normally used to buy grain during the winter!

Yu Xiaocao had Zhu Junyang help to prepare the roe deer and hazel grouse meat. Then, she swiftly cooked up a pot of hazel grouse soup and stewed up a pot of roe deer meat. During the mealtime, she only served up enough food for their group and sent Chunhua and Qiushi with the remaining food to give to the Jin Family.

Old Man Jin attempted to refuse but saw that they sincerely wanted to give the food to them. He thanked them a few times and ended up taking their gift. There was savory preserved meat steamed on top of rice, a large basin of roe deer meat, a basin of hazel grouse soup, and a few different vegetable dishes. The Jin Family couldn't bear to make this much food during the New Years!

“Grandfather, they have given us both medicine and food. Do you think there's something they want from us?” Jin Xiaohu gnawed on the roe deer meat as he mumbled out his question.

“What could they possibly want from us?” Old Man Jin was also a bit puzzled by their guests' generosity.

“Father, do you think they want us to lead them into the mountain? Last time, the eldest son of the Lu Family was pressured to take some nobles up the mountain and ended up getting savaged by a black bear. When he got back, he only managed to endure for a few days before he passed, right? If they ask this of us, you absolutely cannot agree ah. How is this leading them into the mountains? This clearly is asking for us to act as bait!” The Jin Family's second daughter-in-law was a shrewd one. The other two daughters-in-laws also began to look worried and anxious.

“They probably wouldn't, right? Do you think they really resemble those other people ah?” Old Man Jin placed down his bowl and chopsticks as he pondered over this

“Father, how are they not the same as the others? To the rich and powerful, are we, commoners, even people to them? In my opinion, we need to be careful of suspicious folks bearing gifts as they are sure to be ill-intentioned—they likely have ulterior motives!” His second daughter-in-law coldly huffed and picked up a piece of roe deer meat to chew on angrily. The rich added generous amounts of oil and seasonings to their food, so even the vegetables they cooked tasted better than what their own family made.

“Then what can we do ah?” The other two daughters-in-law were so worried now that they had no appetite. Only the second daughter-in-law continued to eat with relish, as if this didn't affect her appetite.

“Grandfather, if they want us to bring them up the mountain, let me do it ah! I often run around the forest near the mountains and know where there aren't any fierce beasts but plenty of prey. Even if we encounter any danger, I have nimble legs and feet and will be able to run much faster than those weak and soft young masters and misses!” After thinking about it in this way, Jin Xiaohu felt an urge to eat more. There was so much delicious food and savory meat. It'd be such a pity to not eat to his fill. It was better to fill his stomach than to continue to fret over this.

As the Jin Family continued to discuss how to avoid being taken advantage of, Xiaocao and the others were currently making their plans for the next day to enter the mountain.

“Tomorrow, just the three of us should go up, right? Didn't they say that there are a lot of vicious creatures up there? It might not be a good thing to bring too many people along!” Yu Xiaocao gestured between herself, Zhu Junyang and Su Ran as she proposed her idea.

Chunhua and Qiushi immediately objected, “Our objective is to keep you safe, Young Miss. You also just said that there are fierce beasts in the mountain. We need to go with you.”

Hou Xiaoliang regarded them with a bit of disdain as he opined, “With the master and Head Su around, does Miss Yu still need you two to protect her? Just obediently stay back and don't drag them from behind. Look at me, I know my limits and didn't even try to bring myself along!”

Chunhua and Qiushi wanted to continue to protest but they were interrupted by Zhu Junyang who made the final decision, “Alright, it'll just be the three of us. Bring along Little Black and Little White. Cao'er, make sure you let those two know that they are not allowed to leave one step away from you.”

“It's not a big deal. Don't I also have Little Glutinous Dumpling ah?” Yu Xiaocao pointed at the golden kitten that was sleeping soundly on her knee and gave a knowing look towards Zhu Junyang.

Su Ran, who was sitting on the other side of Xiaocao, reached out and picked up the golden kitten by its scruff and brought it over. He met the kitten's golden eyes for a bit of time and then shook his head and put the angry little animal back down. He muttered to himself, “This kitten's fur is a bit more brilliant than other cats', but I don't see anything else that's special about it. Are you sure it's able to protect you and wouldn't just run off at the first sign of danger?” The second sentence he directed towards Xiaocao.

“Sir Su, don't underestimate it. Although Little Glutinous Dumpling looks quite small, it's very fast and has sharp claws. It can easily attack an opponent's eyes. Even Little Black and the others don't dare to provoke it!” Yu Xiaocao comforted the little divine stone who wanted to claw Su Ran for the insult. She said a few good words for it in front of Su Ran in order to have the other man not suspect her too much.

“Oh? It's that special eh? Then it must not be an ordinary house cat right? Little Lass, where did you go to get so many powerful pets?” Su Ran was very interested in the arrogant and aloof white wolf. If it wasn't Xiaocao's pet, he would have long snatched it over. Now, she even had an additional strong little kitten and it really piqued his curiosity and desire to investigate more into this.

Yu Xiaocao unconfidently turned her gaze away and lifted the little golden kitten to her eye level. She had an unnatural smile on her face as she said, "I had picked up Little Glutinous Dumpling near the West Mountain, so who knows what type of breed it is. After raising it for so many years, it hasn't gotten bigger. It's always been so tiny and cute, so I kept it by my side."

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"If I'm not remembering incorrectly, I believe your family also has a little roe deer that also hasn't grown throughout these years." Su Ran stretched out a hand towards Xiaocao's cat but was pushed back by a swiping paw. Its speed was quite fast as he wasn't able to dodge it at all. He was pretty sure that the little fellow had retracted its claws for the sake of Xiaocao. Otherwise, his hand right now would be dripping with blood.

Not a single one of the little lass's pets were normal. Even the most normal-looking roe deer was as intelligent as a little devil. He heard that Miss He from the grand princess royal's estate had once asked Xiaocao to give her the little roe deer. However, the animal had overheard her request. From then on, as long as Lass He went over to the Yu Residence, the little roe deer would hide until even its shadow couldn't be found. It would only reappear once the other girl left. As for the white and black wolves, they were even more astounding. Now, she had a nondescript tiny little kitten whose speed was so fast that even he couldn't dodge it!

However, in his eyes, the most unusual one still had to be the master of all of these pets. A teenage girl who was born in an ordinary farming family, whose ancestors had all been ordinary farmers and fishermen, had actually had a variety of talents appear on her. She knew how to improve crops to make them high-yielding, grow vegetables and fruits in greenhouses, manufacture medications, concoct medicinal cuisines, brew wine, cook food, make pastries and frozen desserts...

It was also said that the little lass was talented at cultivating flowers. Any families in the capital who had a good relationship with the Fang Family, if they liked growing flowers, then as soon as their flowers started to wilt, they would send it over. Every time when those flowers went back, it was as if those plants had received a second chance at life and had eaten a miracle medicine!

Out of all of her abilities, other than farming and raising vegetables, the rest had very little to do with her farmer's family background. None of these other things would be something that a normal girl from a farmer's family would ever encounter, let alone become proficient in. If one started to investigate the little lass more closely, one would find that there were too many incongruencies. If it wasn't for the fact that the emperor had stopped him from doing so, he would have already begun to deeply investigate her background. It wasn't because he was afraid that the little lass would go rogue but more to satisfy his own burning curiosity.

It seemed like the emperor already knew just what type of secret the little lass was hiding, which was why he especially told him to not examine her closely. Furthermore, he was instructed to do all he could to prevent other people from investigating the young maiden. Those who attempted to use or trip up the little lass would be warned. If they refused to listen—then he would directly get rid of them! His involvement was the reason why the little lass was able to do so much these past few years in the capital without encountering any sticky situations!

Only after Su Ran stopped looking at the little golden kitten with that piercing gaze did Yu Xiaocao's nervous expression finally relax a bit. With Sir Su's astute mind and abilities, she was sure that Little Glutinous Dumpling's abilities and her secrets would all be an open book to him. There was nothing that she could do to hide from him if he decided to investigate more. She silently prayed that Sir Su would never become too curious about the little divine stone.

[Don't worry ah! The man surnamed Su listens to the commands of your emperor. As long as the emperor doesn't want him to, he won't do more than what is required. If you don't believe me, you can ask your man. Doesn't he have the ability to partially read people's minds ah?]

The little divine stone, in its kitten form, lazily stretched out its body and then jumped on the table. It used its paw to pick up a piece of cumin roe deer meat and threw it towards Little Black and Little White, who were waiting for scraps of food underneath the table. It had no interest in foods that had no spiritual energy in them, even if they tasted very good. After all, at its current level of cultivation, it hadn't gained a sense of taste yet!

Xiaocao saw that when Sir Su finished eating his evening meal, he went straight back to his room to rest and didn't inquire more about the little golden kitten. She threw a questioning look towards Zhu Junyang, who had just placed down his bowl and chopsticks.

Zhu Junyang didn't want to see her worry about this and immediately explained the situation to her, “If the emperor doesn't want him to investigate something, Chief Steward Su will not do so! Tell me, does the emperor already know your secret? Is that why he's prohibiting other people from investigating into you?”

“The emperor is wise and far-sighted, with clear-sighted eyes. What can possibly escape his gaze?” Yu Xiaocao had a helpless expression on her face and then remarked in a slightly joyful tone of voice, “Fortunately, the emperor is a wise and benevolent ruler and doesn't covet this official's treasure. Otherwise...I don't even want to think about it ah!”

Zhu Junyang fell silent for a moment and there wasn't a single expression on his face as he lightly drew the little lass into his arms and placed his chin on her head. He stayed like that for a long time before he finally broke his silence and said, "Don't be afraid, this prince is here for you!"

Yu Xiaocao suddenly felt her eyes grow hot and sparkling tears appeared in them. She was very well aware of the deep meaning behind his words. 'Don't be afraid, even if the entire world is against you, this prince will always stay by your side and protect you using my own body, keeping you safe for eternity...'

She forcefully blinked the tears back from her eyes and deliberately stated in a light and happy voice, "You are right! Even if the sky falls, I have someone tall to shield me! Why should we worry about what-ifs? Life is so beautiful, so we need to treasure all of the good parts! Ruizhi, from your behavior, this young maiden will now declare that your probation period has ended early!"

"Really? Then this prince will immediately have someone send a letter back to my parents to have them prepare the matters around proposing marriage..." Zhu Junyang didn't expect this to happen and was extremely happy by this change in the situation. His enchanting and alluring phoenix eyes suddenly glowed with joy and were so bright they could blind a person. His handsome face, which sometimes looked androgynously beautiful, had a large grin on it that couldn't be concealed.

Yu Xiaocao's large pair of eyes curved up in happiness and her dimples became quite apparent as she continued to gaze at that alluringly handsome face. The man before her only showed his good sides to her alone. His tall and imposing figure paired with his strong body always seemed to stand in front of her, shielding her from the wind and rain that raged outside. Why did she still need to worry about her own personal gains and losses at this point? She was sure that her partner would be this man! In addition, she was confident that this deliriously happy man in front of her would be the one to give her a lifetime of happiness.

"No need to rush! We're still about three to four months from the New Years! It won't be too late to propose marriage at the start of spring next year!" Yu Xiaocao softly said and the look in her eyes was incredibly gentle and soft.

Zhu Junyang placed his hands around her slender waist and suddenly lifted her up high, as if he was holding up a priceless treasure. Then he gently placed her down as he spoke somewhat incoherently, "How could I not be in a rush? This prince has waited for so many years for this exact day! This won't do! I need to write a letter and send it by pigeon immediately to tell my lady mother to ask the head priest of Huguo Temple to calculate a fortuitous day. Also, she needs to start preparing the items needed for the three letters and six rites..."

As he spoke, he let go of her hand and was about to hastily walk out the room. He was pulled back by Yu Xiaocao, who didn't know whether she should laugh or cry at his actions, "Don't you know what time is it right now? It's already completely dark outside and the homing pigeons should be resting right now. That being said, did you bring any homing pigeons along on this trip?"

Zhu Junyang gradually calmed down after hearing Xiaocao's words. A hint of self-deprecation and embarrassment appeared on his handsome face as he admitted, "This prince was so happy that I became befuddled! How about we head back to the stud farm tomorrow? We'll have plenty of chances to hunt and gather herbs in the future..."

"You're being absurd now!" They were already at the foot of the mountain and Yu Xiaocao had no desire to postpone this hunting trip, "Where did that shrewd, calm, and meticulous Royal Prince Yang I know disappear to?"

"Uh isn't this...becoming hasty out of pure happiness ah?" Zhu Junyang also thought that he was being a bit ridiculous. He pulled the little lass, who was behind him, into a hug and enjoyed the feeling of her soft body against his. He then landed a fiery kiss on her temples and started to become a little unruly.

Yu Xiaocao escaped from his arms and pushed him out of the room, "It's getting late and we need to prepare to enter the mountain tomorrow. Go back to your room and rest ah!"

"What else do we need to prepare now? Don't we just need to bring your secret barbecue seasonings along? How can we possibly starve with that?" Zhu Junyang wanted that fragrant and sweet body to stay with him and held onto her again. This time, he secretly tightened his grip. In a few more months, the little lass would be labeled officially as his. His heart desperately wanted to scream, to let the entire world know, that she was about to become his official fiancée!

Yu Xiaocao could sense the roiling emotions in the man behind her. She didn't want things to go too far in this simple and crude room. She cooled down her voice as she blandly asked, "Is it hard to understand my words?"

"Easy to understand, very easy!! This prince is not one of those people who is all talk and no action. I'm also not the type to say beautiful words to trick young maidens and forget what I pledged later on. I still remember that men need to follow the 'three injunctions and four virtuous things to do'! They are: the man must listen and obey his wife's commands, when the wife goes out, the man needs to go as well..."

Zhu Junyang sensed that the little lass was feeling a bit uneasy and hurriedly recited the 'Standards of the Optimal Man' to her.

Yu Xiaocao couldn't take it anymore and burst out into laughter. She coquettishly turned around to look him in the eye as she said, "Then, this young maiden orders you: 'Let me go! Step away and leave!!'"

Zhu Junyang obediently let go of her and didn't try to sneak another touch in. He dillydallied in the room, not wanting to leave, so Yu Xiaocao had to push him out of the side room. When she saw that the master room in the courtyard was dark and that there was a shadow of Su Ran's body on the opposite bed, she decided that no one was paying attention to them and she hurriedly snatched a kiss from her man's perfect, red lips. Having a man was like having a pet! If you didn't give them some treats now and then, they wouldn't listen to you!

Her actions were quite unexpected but extremely welcome for Zhu Junyang. However, his greedy heart still felt like the kiss was over too quickly. He didn't even get to taste her when it ended. It happened so quickly that it felt like just an illusion.

The moon was out tonight and shone brightly. The watery light from the moon shone on the little lass's snow white face and seemed to make her skin glow. He felt like he could never get enough of her delicate brows and eyes. His eyes became extremely gentle and soft as he stared at her, as if he was gazing at a rare and precious treasure. He lightly held the young maiden's face and bent over to get closer and closer to those red lips that seemed as tender and lovely as a flower...

"Cough cough! Cough cough!!" Suddenly, the sound of heavy coughs could be heard from the neighboring room, followed by Su Ran's clear voice, "Royal Prince Yang, do you prefer sleeping at the head or the tail of the kang bed?"

During the ninth month, the lands near the northern border already had cold and chilly mornings and evenings. Old Man Jin, who was quite hospitable, had lit up the kang beds in the east courtyard's three rooms. Su Ran had earlier sensed that there was someone who wanted to act like a hungry wolf on the other side of the window. It looked like that bad wolf was trying to take advantage of a certain young maiden.

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Since he had agreed to that maidservant Wutong's request, then he needed to complete his task. Thus, he found an excuse to butt in on someone else's 'wicked conduct'!

Zhu Junyang's lips were only around two centimeters away from Xiaocao's and that unexpected voice had cut off his desire. His handsome face momentarily darkened and regrets surfaced up within his heart—why did they have to bring such an irksome fellow along on this trip ah? Chief Steward Su was truly too indiscreet, right? Zhu Junyang was absolutely sure that this fellow was interrupting them on purpose!

Yu Xiaocao muffled her laughter and looked like a little squirrel eating a pinecone. When she saw the alluringly bewitching face in front of her face, she knew that he was quite upset with nowhere to vent his temper. She felt her heart soften, so she gently hugged him again before rising up on her tiptoes and giving a quick kiss on his attractive lips.

The tight look on Zhu Junyang's face seemed to relax a bit and he bent down his body to swiftly return a kiss. His voice sounded deep and slightly gloomy as he hoarsely said, "You must be tired after traveling hard these past few days right? Go rest early. Tomorrow, if you're still tired, we can rest another day before heading up."

"No need! My body is perfectly fine!" Yu Xiaocao had gulped down a cup of mystic-stone water earlier and the vast majority of her exhaustion had disappeared, "The kitchen has hot water, so you should have Xiaohou bring some over to soak your feet. It really helps in relaxing you. Also, I'll brew some tea for you and, in a moment, I'll have Chunhua bring it over. Don't drink too much tea at night. Otherwise, you'll have trouble sleeping..."

The little lass chattered on and on, just like a young married wife incessantly reminding her husband just before he left. Zhu Junyang thought that this was quite a novel experience for him and didn't want to let her go. Finally, Xiaocao managed to pull herself out of this beautiful man's trap and pushed this fellow back to his own room.

As for Su Ran, who had been in his room this entire time, he had seen the sticky-sweet actions between the two of them. However, he didn't try to interrupt them at all. The little lass and Royal Prince Yang were a young couple in love. There was no need for him to act as an annoying bystander. If he turned a blind eye to all of this, it would pass quite soon!

The next morning, Yu Xiaocao woke up very early to make breakfast. Like before, she made enough breakfast to feed her entire group as well as the Jin Family. There was a pot of thick congee, soft and tasty steamed white buns, and Xiaocao's preserved vegetables made from her own secret recipe. Although it was a bit simple, everyone ate the food with relish.

Old Man Jin had already concluded that this group of rich people was different from the last lot. Although the two men in the group were more cold, they didn't stand on ceremonies and demand ridiculous things. Nor did any of them look down on them for being common peasants. The delicate young maiden who loved to smile was especially cordial to everyone. She didn't seem to have any of the innate arrogance of a young miss from a noble family. These people were generous to others and never made them feel like they were conferring a great favor when they gave a gift to others. It felt like they were being honored and respected instead.

He had seen the noble guests packing their luggage. Just as they were about to leave to head to the mountain, he warned them out of the goodness of his heart, "There are many fierce beasts deep in the mountain, so you all must be very careful. I would advise you to avoid going too far into the forests and instead spend more time on the outskirts to get some hunting done instead!"

Zhu Junyang nodded his head at the old man. Although his face was expressionless, he appreciated the other man's good intentions. Yu Xiaocao smiled brightly and thanked him, "Thank you, Grandfather Jin, for your reminder. We appreciate your good thoughts, so don't worry about us ah! I left some fodder for those horses we're leaving here, so I'll have to trouble Grandfather Jin and Xiaohu to help us out and make sure they get fed every day."

"Not a problem at all! Please be at ease ah! We promise that we will take good care of your horses!" Old Man Jin solemnly nodded his head and almost saluted them.

Xiaocao saw that the two handsome men were done packing their bags and were ready to go, so she picked up her own bag and turned to wave goodbye to their hosts. She grinned, "Make sure to dry out the newly harvested corn when there's a nice day. After the kernels are dry, you can stone-grind them into cornmeal, which can be added into flatbread or used to make steamed buns. It tastes best if you mix it with some white flour as the texture and mouthfeel is great. I left two bags of white flour in the kitchen. Just take it as our thanks for keeping an eye on our luggage and feeding the horses."

Before Old Man Jin and his grandson could reply, she scampered away to chase after the two tall men, one who was dressed entirely in white while the other was dressed entirely in black. Chunhua and Qiushi both carried a bundle on their backs and followed her closely from behind.

"Grandfather, we've encountered some generous people! My mother, after taking the medication they gave us last evening, didn't cough for the entire night and also didn't have any issues breathing either. She slept very well." Jin Xiaohu had already retracted his thorny exterior a while ago. He stared at the group of six as they left and his gaze held a bit of gratitude in it.

At this time, a few of the other villagers came over to ask about the new guests. The two of them vaguely replied with minimal details about the noble guests. How could they tell them exactly what had happened? If they told the other people that these people were kind hearted, not arrogant, and generous, wouldn't those villagers who liked to take advantage of others come out of the woodwork and cause issues? Later on, the topic of the conversation went to their family's harvest of corn. When the other villagers saw how much corn they had in their courtyard, they all became quite envious and expressed the desire to buy seeds from them.

Old Man Jin remembered what his eldest son had told him and hastily explained to the other villagers that it was best for them to buy corn seeds in town next year. The seeds from their harvest may not necessarily maintain the high yield. Some of the villagers didn't believe him, so Old Man Jin could only sell them some seeds. As for the other people, they decided to wait like their family and go into town next year and buy corn seeds from the grain shops. Later on, those villagers found out that planting the corn seeds they bought from the Jin Family on the same type of land with the same type of management resulted in vastly different yields from those who bought seeds from the grain shops. Only then did the villagers believe his words and regret their previous decisions.

As for Xiaocao's group, not long after they left the village, they had entered the start of the mountainous forest. It truly was an old forest and couldn't be compared to the West Mountain back in Xiaocao's hometown. Although they were only on the outskirts, they would see beautifully plumaged golden pheasants fly by from time to time or a few wild hares suddenly appearing in the underbrush. They could hear the sounds of living creatures on both sides of the trail they were on.

Xiaocao took out her scented bags filled with herbs that repelled insects and snakes and gave them to Hou Xiaoliang and everyone else. The little divine stone had helped her increase the potency of these herbs. It told her that all of the bugs and snakes in the area could feel it and were keeping a wide berth from them. That way she wouldn't be frightened by them! Although during the harder times she had previously caught a king ratsnake and made it into a soup, as a girl, she still wasn't very fond of these soft and long animals.

The mountainous forest became more and more dense and the shrubs and underbrush became more and more lush. Fortunately, they had the two experts, Zhu Junyang and Chief Steward Su, in the front opening the way. Xiaocao was behind them, carrying a tiny bag on her shoulders. From time to time, she would pick off a leaf and use it as a tiny flute and whistle a little ditty. She seemed quite free and unrestrained.

In the past, when she was still living in Dongshan Village, she often entered the mountain and ran a few times in the deep forest. Consequently, she was quite at ease in this area. Everyone else also had no problems with this terrain, so their speed didn't decrease at all. Yu Xiaocao's primary goal was to find some rare medicinal ingredients. Hunting was only a side perk.

Therefore, as soon as she entered the mountainous forest, she had the little divine stone transform into its kitten form and let it roam independently. Since some extremely rare medicinal herbs that were on the older side had their own spiritual energy, the little divine stone would be the best to find them as it was very sensitive towards spiritual energy. It could be said that it was a rare ingredient detector!

In the front was Zhu Junyang, who was opening the way. He constantly thought of the little lass and worried as if she was a porcelain doll, trying to keep her from getting any bumps or bruises. From time to time he would look back to see how she was doing. When he saw that a tiny kitten had appeared on her shoulders, his phoenix eyes flashed a bit but his expression stayed the same.

Su Ran, on the other hand, laughed when he saw the little cat, "Why did you bring this little guy along? Does it have a special task at hand?"

"Sir Su, don't look down on Little Glutinous Dumpling. I've trained it to especially be able to find rare medicinal ingredients. It has a very sensitive nose and can accurately distinguish the smell of rare herbs from a bunch of other smells! I heard that Jinalin produces ginseng, reishi mushroom, and other precious ingredients. Perhaps Little Glutinous Dumpling will be able to find a lot today!" Yu Xiaocao quickly outlined the little divine stone's abilities such that, in the future, Su Ran wouldn't feel too suspicious.

Just as she finished speaking, it seemed like she had sealed the deal. The little golden kitten suddenly jumped off her shoulders and swiftly ran towards a cliff on the right side. In a blink of an eye, it came back with a frog that was even larger than itself in its mouth.

Yu Xiaocao stared at it for a moment and called out in surprise, "Wow! An Asiatic grass frog! Not only does it have tender meat but it also can be used to make hasma, which is a very valuable tonic. It is very nourishing, helps support the lungs, and improves one mind!"

She took out a sack from Chunhua's luggage and put the Asiatic grass frog that Little Glutinous Dumpling caught inside. She then spoke further to the two men in front, "If you two see any more forest frogs like this, remember to catch them for me ah! Tonight, I'll roast some forest frogs for us to eat!"

The two of them were incredibly handsome in their own ways and accepted their mission to continue opening up the road while they looked for more frogs for her. In fact, the two of them actually ended up catching quite a lot! That night, when they camped down, Yu Xiaocao began to prepare all of these Asiatic grass frogs and made a secret special sauce to roast them until they were delicious. The two men, who had worked hard the whole day, were able to eat their fill. She herself spent some extra time to extract hasma from all of the frogs. Hasma that had been infused with spiritual energy from the little divine stone was even more effective than the normal kind. When they returned, she was planning on sending some to Princess Consort Jing and Imperial Prince Jing so they could take it to nourish their bodies. She was sure that the effects would be very good!

Zhu Junyang watched as the little lass, who had walked a whole day in the mountain, worked tirelessly to extract the hasma. A whole sack of forest frogs only produced around two small jars of hasma and one of those jars was going to be sent to his lady mother. He felt his heart soften immediately. The little lass never forgot to send anything that was good for the body to his mother.

If it wasn't for the little lass tirelessly helping to nourish his mother's body, he was pretty sure that she'd be bedridden at this time. Memories came back from long ago. Back then, the imperial physicians, who had been sent to diagnose and treat his lady mother, had once tactfully told his lord father that his mother's life was likely destined to be short because of her weak constitution.

Now, their residence's Imperial Physician Zheng was almost like a decoration. This was because the little lass had prescribed special medical cuisines to everyone in the household according to their body constitutions. Furthermore, she would even send some tasty foods and drinks over from time to time. His lady mother, who had previously been wan and weak, had been treated so well that her complexion was rosy and her body healthy. Not even a sneeze came out of her anymore.

All of this was due to the little lass in front of him! Zhu Junyang revealed a gentle and soft expression on his handsome face and involuntarily attributed her actions to 'loving the house and its crow'. He thought that because she liked him, that was the reason why she treated his family members so well. It must be that reason!

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"Ruizhi, over there! There's a purple reishi mushroom!" A clear and melodious voice sounded in the deep thickets. It startled all of the nearby birds, causing them to flee into the air.

Zhu Junyang raised his head and followed the little golden kitten as it jumped around. He was light on his feet as he leapt onto a tree that had a trunk thick enough for several people to put their arms around

it. There were plenty of old and majestic trees like this one in the forest. Towards the top of the tree, he could see a giant hole in the tree at the top. He couldn't tell if it appeared because the tree had gotten hit by lightning before or for some other reason.

The little golden kitten stopped right outside that hole and lazily looked back at him. It used its paw to point at a stalk of purple reishi mushroom that was growing out of the hole in the tree. They had already been in the mountains for three days now and Zhu Junyang had gotten used to this little kitten surprising him from time to time. He inspected the reishi mushroom. It had a dense purple color and seemed to have an inner glow. Even someone like him, who didn't know much about medicinal materials, could tell that it wasn't a common object.

He took out a dagger from his boot and carefully cut out the reishi mushroom along with a small portion of wood from the tree.

Once he came down from the tree, Xiaocao impatiently came over and carefully took the purple reishi mushroom from his hands. She inspected it with a face full of happy greed.

Su Ran also sidled over to take a glance as he calmly said, "This purple reishi mushroom must be at least a few hundred years old. Such a rare and old herb is invaluable."

Yu Xiaocao gleefully put the reishi mushroom away and then spoke to him, "With this, the Grand Tutor's diabetes, the matriarch of Count Boyang's residence dizziness, and my tonic to resist aging will all have one of its main ingredients!! Little Glutinous Dumpling, good job ah!"

[Stop calling this divine stone by the name Little Glutinous Dumpling. This name is too lowly and not worthy of my divine status!!] The little divine stone once again protested the name given to it by Xiaocao. Despite its resistance, it was never able to break away from it and it was really annoyed that it had such an inglorious nickname.

"Little Glutinous Dumpling has a nice ring to it! Furthermore, it has a great meaning! Round and smooth, which hints at you reuniting with Goddess Nuwa in a smooth and happy manner!" Yu Xiaocao placated the little divine stone, who was about to explode in a temper tantrum, with a half truth. This treasure mountain truly had quite a number of rare ingredients around, so she still needed the divine stone to keep searching them for her!

The little divine stone jumped on her shoulders and angrily scratched at her pigtails, making them messy. It only felt better after her hair had become a rat's nest.

Su Ran stared at the little kitten who was wreaking havoc on Xiaocao's hair. He was very puzzled by all of this. How could a seemingly ordinarily little cat, not much different than a newborn kitten, do such incredible things? Truly, it looked like what Xiaocao said was right. This cat had an uncanny ability to find precious medicinal herbs!

They had been in the mountains for three days. Other than the Asiatic grass frog on the first day, they also obtained two stalks of hundred year old ginseng on the second day. Now, today, they managed to get a few hundred year old purple reishi mushroom! If any one of these herbs got taken out, it would cause a ruckus, with people rushing to grab them.

“Lass, when you leave, you need to hide your little kitten well! It's like the goose that lays the golden eggs and is a true treasure!” Even Su Ran himself, who always thought no amount of money could move him, couldn't help but feel tempted by this little fellow's abilities.

[You're the female goose; your whole family are female geese!] The little golden kitten became infuriated again and rushed towards Su Ran like a bullet. Its paws whooshed as it attempted to make the odious fellow in front of him get a new 'beggar's outfit'.

Fortunately, Su Ran was skilled at martial arts and was able to block the cat's attacks with difficulty before Xiaocao hurriedly rushed over and called the cat back, hugging it close to her body. His clothes were therefore spared ravagement. This little fellow's speed was truly too quick. It was harder to stop him than all of the concealed weapons he had encountered in this lifetime.

Su Ran felt some lingering fear as he gazed at the little kitten, who was currently brandishing its claws at him from Xiaocao's arms. He really didn't know how he had offended the little fellow. Earlier, he was clearly complimenting it for its abilities!

“This fellow is quite smart and has an intelligence to rival a teenager. Earlier, when you said that it was like the goose that lays the golden eggs, it became angry at being compared to a goose...” Zhu Junyang grinned happily from the side, taking pleasure in the other man's misfortune. Earlier, when Little Glutinous Dumpling was having its temper tantrum, he didn't lift a single finger to help the other man despite being close by. It was worth having this eyesore along as he finally got to see Chief Steward Su in a less than flattering situation.

Su Ran shook his head in bemusement and said, “Just what type of breed is this cat? It not only has a very keen nose but can also understand what humans say! If it wasn't the pet of the little lass, I would want to grab it for myself so I could inspect it more!”

“Sir Su, if you like it, then you can borrow it for the next few days! Little Glutinous Dumpling is very easy to take care and it can hunt for itself. You don't need to do much. However, it loves to play and can sometimes run off for a dozen days to half a month. It's quite wild ah!” Yu Xiaocao kept her two hands around the little kitten as she presented it towards Su Ran.

The little divine had a look of disdain on its face as it bared its fangs in protest, [Strike! This divine stone proclaims a strike!! Ahead of us, not very far, is a stalk of ginseng that is over a thousand years old. I originally wanted to find it for you. Now...hmph hmph! I can save myself the trouble now!]

“Aiya! Don't be so petty! Sir Su isn't someone who has a greedy and dark heart. He's only a bit curious about you, that's all! He won't do anything to you!” Yu Xiaocao placed its furry little body next to her cheek and gently rubbed herself against it. She talked to the little divine stone in a flattering manner through their mind to mind link.

[You're just a sell out looking for honor! Although that fellow has quite a bit of power and is skilled at martial arts, in front of this divine stone, it's not enough! With this divine being's current level of cultivation, I just need to extend a small finger to subdue that fellow. You don't need to lower yourself in front of him to beg for favor!] The little divine stone's dark golden eyes flashed with an evil light.

Su Ran felt the little golden kitten's 'malice' emanating towards him and felt a large sense of danger approaching him. He hurriedly retreated a few steps and cautiously stared at the kitten's eyes that were shining with ill will. He revealed a small bitter smile and shook his head at Xiaocao, “Forget about it ah! I don't think I can enjoy this kind of glory! I'm pretty sure that it only does this for you. If anyone else tried, it would rebel and be untamable! Royal Prince Yang, do you want to try?”

“This prince is not as honored as Chief Steward Su. Even you have been rebuffed by the cat, so this prince will not bother even trying!” Zhu Junyang glanced at the fierce little cat that was in Xiaocao's arms and revealed a scared expression.

[Looks like you know some tact!] The little divine stone's voice suddenly appeared in his mind and ended up shocking Zhu Junyang to his bones. When he sensed Su Ran looking over in his direction, he hurriedly adjusted his expression, pretending as if nothing had happened.

“Awoooooo——” A familiar howl could be heard. Before long, Little Black's large and sturdy body suddenly appeared before the group of humans. This fellow instantly began to act like a large black dog as soon as it saw its owner. Its fluffy black tail was raised high and it waved back and forth in excitement. It had spent a lot of time with the other dogs in Dongshan Village in the past, so it also had picked up some dog-like habits from them.

Little Black proudly presented the object in its mouth by carefully placing it in front of Xiaocao. Everyone stared at the object. Surprisingly, it wasn't some prey the wolf had caught and was instead a stalk of ginseng that was about the size of a person's thumb. The ginseng still had a layer of fresh dirt on it!

Apparently, when this fellow saw the little cat, who it had determined to be something it couldn't offend, being praised by everyone for finding old ginseng, it became envious and jealous. It decided to stop hunting game and began to dig around for herbs. Unexpectedly, it had actually ended up finding a stalk of ginseng!

Although this ginseng wasn't very old, it was still an authentic stalk of northeast ginseng from the mountains. Furthermore, this fellow was quite observant and didn't break a single part of the herb. However, this fellow's nose and mouth now had a thick layer of soil on it. Paired with its fawning attitude, it looked quite foolish.

Little White, who was holding a large hazel grouse in its mouth, had a look of pure disdain on its face, as if it didn't want to acknowledge that this foolish fellow was its own younger brother.

Yu Xiaocao stifled her urge to laugh and helped Little Black wipe off all of the dirt from its face. She rubbed its large head and generously complimented the wolf, “Little Black is truly too talented. You were able to learn how to find ginseng so quickly. Tonight, I'll make sure to add an extra chicken leg to your food!”

Little Black cracked open its large mouth, which made it look like it was grinning broadly. It used its claws to gently push at the ginseng it had dug up, telling its master to quickly put the ginseng away. Following that, it sent a look full of pride at Little White as if it was saying, “Aren't you always showing off how capable you are ah? Being able to catch a hazel grouse! But look here, the master already said that tonight I'm going to get an extra chicken leg. None will be going to you!”

Su Ran could apparently tell what the wolf was thinking from its expressions and couldn't help but laugh, "Lass, I feel like all of the pets you raise are like you. Hardworking and very interesting!"

"I don't actually want to receive a compliment like that, alright ah?" Yu Xiaocao packed the ginseng away. Although she couldn't sell it for a sky high price, she could still use it to make some ginseng shampoo, conditioner, or add its essence to some skincare products. It was quite useful after all.

[Not even a bit like a wolf! So shameful ah!!] The little divine stone truly disdained Little Black's actions, so it huffed at the animal. Then it remarked arrogantly, [This divine being won't quibble with these silly mortals. Let's go, I'm going to bring you to that ginseng that's over a thousand years old!]

Yu Xiaocao couldn't restrain herself from cheering in glee. Her eyes shifted a bit under the flabbergasted looks of Su Ran and Zhu Junyang as she smiled somewhat unnaturally. She pointed at the little golden kitten in her arms and stated in embarrassment, "It looks like Little Glutinous Dumpling has sniffed out another herb. It's struggling so hard in my arms to get out ah!"

"Then let it out and have it bring us to it!" Zhu Junyang knew that the little divine stone had said something to her which caused the little lass to react impolitely. Thus, he helped her hide this situation.

"Lass, this time when we came out, we originally planned on hunting. Looks like it's turned into a trip to help you find medicinal ingredients. You've made quite a haul already, so don't forget to give us some spoils when we're done!" Su Ran looked back and forth between the two people as he quipped.

Although Yu Xiaocao did love money, she wasn't a petty person. She generously said, "Don't worry ah, when I get back, I'll personally make some nourishing and beautifying medicine. You will definitely get a good share!" Su Ran's expression changed for a brief second before it returned back to its usual tranquility, "I'll happily take the nourishing medicine. As for the beautifying tonics, it's probably better if you give it to other people, right?"

"Mhm! You're right! With your appearance and demeanor, you're truly one of the most handsome people in the capital. How could you possibly need..." Yu Xiaocao stuck out her tongue, acting like the mischievous kitten in her arms. She occasionally also liked to show her claws.

Seeing that Su Ran's expression was about to break, Zhu Junyang hastily interjected for fear that he would get angry after being 'offended' by his little lass, "Didn't you say that the kitten discovered something? If it's another ginseng or reishi mushroom that's over a century old, then we have quite a good harvest today ah!"

'More than a century old ginseng? Humph! Humph! Hold onto your jaw lest you're so shocked later that it drops on your feet.' Yu Xiaocao wrinkled her nose and had a 'just wait and see' expression on her face.

The little divine stone jumped out of Xiaocao's arms and quickly shuttled through the knee-deep grass. Su Ran was obviously interested in its abilities, but after being interrupted by Little Black, his desire to explore had extinguished quite a lot. He quickly followed behind the golden kitten to see what kind of new surprise it would bring them.

The small golden kitten ran very fast, but with Zhu Junyang and Su Ran's skills, they were still more than capable of keeping up with it. It was apparent that it had slowed down to accommodate these 'weak humans'. As for Yu Xiaocao, who was an even weaker human in its eyes, she was held by Zhu Junyang, experiencing the feeling of flying without touching the grass.

After a few turns in the mountain forest, they suddenly saw light in front of them. The dense forest disappeared, and a steep cliff appeared in front of them. The golden kitten stopped in its tracks and sniffed its nose. Then it turned towards a direction and galloped down the cliff towards the rocky valley.

Yu Xiaocao, who was being held in a strong arm like a light cloth-bag, didn't feel good at all. She only felt a surge in her stomach, and the feeling of motion sickness that she hadn't felt in a long time came back to her. 'Why haven't we arrived yet? If this goes on, I'm about to vomit!'

Zhu Junyang sensed Xiaocao's discomfort, so he quickly changed his posture to carry her princess-style, letting her head gently rest on his strong chest. Yu Xiaocao subconsciously hugged his neck and smiled pitifully at Zhu Junyang, who had lowered his head to look at her.

The lass was so light that she was barely heavier than a bag of rice. When Zhu Junyang looked at the lass's nearly transparent, pale face and the weak smile on her face, he felt a pain in his heart. When they returned to the capital, he had to find two capable assistants for the lass to help her with the matters of her business and breeding.

As a young girl who had just reached the age of fifteen, the noble maidens in the capital would only stay in the inner courtyard to embroider, raise flora, recite poems, and play the qin. They were still at an age of acting spoiled in front of their parents. His lass, on the other hand, had too many burdens on her shoulders!

It was so irresponsible of the emperor to put the burden of solving the problem of the people's livelihood on a young girl! The lass must be so stressed ah. She was so skinny that she barely had any meat on her body, and her waist was so thin that he could almost hug her fully with just one arm.

When the matter of horse breeding at the stable was solved, he must present a memorial to the emperor to request him to not put so much pressure on his little lass! Right now, they were familiar with the cultivation method of winter wheat and corn. The little lass was also freed from the laborious field work and able to do what she liked to do!

Zhu Junyang was multitasking. He was thinking about how to help shoulder his lass's burden, while holding the delicate young girl and jumping on the rocks in the valley.

In the silent valley, the fist-sized golden kitten leaped nimbly through the rocks. It was followed by two handsome men in black and white. In the arms of the man dressed in black was a clever-looking young maiden in a light-yellow dress. As for Xiaoliang and the two maidservants, Chunhua and Qiushi, they had long lost track of them.

Suddenly, the golden kitten stopped in front of a steep cliff. It seemed to have sensed something when it slowly arched its body and quietly approached the disorderly gravel and grass. It looked like it would attack at any time.

Zhu Junyang and Su Ran also noticed that something was off, so they stopped a short distance away. Zhu Junyang put Xiaocao down and softly told her to stay behind him and never be more than three steps away from him. Su Ran moved forward slowly with silent footsteps and an expression full of vigilance.

A sudden groan came from the dense grass in front of the golden kitten. The little divine stone stopped briefly, and then continued to slowly approach the injured human who was two steps away. Zhu Junyang and Su Ran looked at each other when they heard the sound. They didn't slow down and gradually got closer to the messy grass area.

As they got closer, the scene in the grass appeared in front of them: an old man with gray hair and disheveled beard was lying in the rubble, as if he had just awoken from a coma, with a painful expression on his face. His face and arms were covered with wounds, the corner of his mouth was stained with blood, and one of his legs was bent in an unnatural angle. In conclusion, the injury was quite serious ah!

“Ah! This old gentleman must have fallen from the cliff!” Yu Xiaocao looked around and saw a broken medicine box lying not too far from the injured old man. ‘Uh! He’s also of the same profession ah!’

[The thousand year old ginseng is on top of this mountain wall.] The little divine stone wasn’t interested in the wounded, and weak humans couldn’t arouse the slightest sympathy from it. Besides people and things related to its master, what did other things have to do with it? It jumped several times and climbed onto the protruding rocks and small tree leaning out on the side. When it got on top of the cliff, it stopped beside the thousand year old ginseng.

The thousand year old ginseng was definitely something that could only be found by accident and not by seeking. Of course, Xiaocao wouldn’t let it get away! She looked at the two men beside her, and then said to Su Ran, “Sir Su, would you please go up and get the medicinal herb?”

Although she was merely an amateurish doctor, she couldn’t ignore a patient lying in front of her. As for Zhu Junyang, he was currently guarding her in a protective stance. There was absolutely no way that she could persuade him to leave her alone with a stranger. Even if that person was unconscious from an injury. Thus, she could only ask Chief Steward Su to help.

“Alright! Leave it to me!” With a light jump, Su Ran had landed on top of a rock that was several dozens of meters high. After he observed the surroundings, he jumped a few more times and gradually got closer to the golden kitten. Xiaocao was stunned as she looked on from below. His white robe fluttered as he nimbly jumped, appearing like an immortal who descended to the human realm. Sir Su was seriously too handsome and he was even more ethereal than white tofu!

The scene in front of Xiaocao’s, who was very amazed, eyes suddenly darkened. Her pair of sparkling eyes were covered by a hand. She shifted her gaze and saw Zhu Junyang’s jealous eyes. She secretly stuck out her tongue—her man’s vinegar jar was toppled over again ah!

Yu Xiaocao lowered her head and pretended to be busy checking the pulse of the old man lying on the ground. Then, with the combination of the external wounds, she concluded, “He should have fallen off

the cliff. There are multiple scratches on his body. His left leg is fractured, three ribs are broken on his right side, and there's an internal injury in his lungs..."

It was hard to say whether the old man was fortunate or not! It was indeed unlucky of him to fall down the mountains when collecting medicinal herbs alone. However, he was considered quite lucky because he had encountered a group of people. Otherwise, he would have likely died from the serious injuries by lying here. Even if he didn't die of a serious injury, there was also the chance of him attracting a wild beast and being bitten to death!

Yu Xiaocao took out a pill for internal injuries. She melted it with mystic-stone water, pinched the old man's mouth, and poured it down. Then she had Zhu Junyang cut down a wooden stick nearby to help secure the old man's injured leg. Fortunately, his ribs had just cracked, and weren't broken and dislocated. Otherwise, with her measly skills as a doctor, she really didn't know how to fix his bones.

After taking care of the more serious injuries, Xiaocao asked Zhu Junyang to help apply Wound Balm on the old man. By the time all of this was done, the medicine and mystic-stone water that the old man consumed had begun to work. His pale face and painful expression had got better.

As for Su Ran who had easily climbed the mountain, he was so shocked that his eyes were about to pop out. This small golden kitten was really something. It was actually able to find a thousand year old ginseng! The ginseng that it had just dug out was as thick as two fingers, and it was shaped like a human with a head and four limbs. Facial features could actually be vaguely seen on its head, and it actually had 'something' between its 'two legs'! Perhaps this fellow might become a sprite in a few years!

The little divine stone waited on the side with a calm expression. Not to mention this ginseng that had just taken a human shape, it had seen quite a lot of ginseng babies that had cultivated into sprites. At that time, it was cultivating beside Goddess Nuwa and the Goddess of Spirits often sent elixir pills over, so it didn't need to catch these mystical herb sprites to help with its cultivation.

If there was a ginseng baby right now, it could help it recover decades of cultivation! It would definitely catch and eat it without hesitation! Unfortunately, the spiritual energy in this dimension was too sparse. To have the possibility of taking human form, it would have to be situated in an exceptional location and absorb the essences of the world for ten thousands of years. After all, the cultivation of plants was much more difficult than animals!

While it was regretting that it didn't catch and save up some ginseng babies in the past, it didn't notice that it was being coveted by others. Su Ran's eyes, which were as deep as a pool of water, stared fixedly

at the arrogant-looking golden kitten in front of him as he calculated his chance of winning against this 'evil creature'. It wasn't that he wanted to take it as his own, but instead he wanted to subdue it with force to gain its approval and occasionally instruct it to work for him.

As if it had sensed his intention, the golden kitten turned around and looked at him with obvious contempt. It seemed to be saying, 'If you want to subdue this Divine Stone, you need to cultivate for five thousand years first!' However, with the little spiritual energy in this world, it would be difficult for even the most talented cultivators to reach the next level of cultivation. Before the cultivator had even gotten a breakthrough, he would have already exhausted all his life force and gone to meet the King of Hell!

Su Ran pondered for a moment and felt that he had a low chance of winning. He didn't know about the other aspects, but he was taken by surprise with the golden kitten's appalling speed. One with strength could take on ten people, but one with speed could defeat ten strong men. Therefore, it was indeed quite tricky!

He wrapped the human-shaped ginseng with a silk handkerchief and held it carefully in his hands. He relaxed his body and used a few rocks as a point of leverage to gently drift down the towering cliff.